PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 84

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1984-85

COMPRISING PERIOD
21 OCTOBER—30 OCTOBER 1985

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IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 84**

EIGHTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1984-85

House of Commons

Monday 21 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Harry Lowes Cowans, esquire, Member for Tyne Bridge, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss that we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Labour Statistics

1. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the unemployment figures for the Cynon Valley.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): The number of unemployed in the hon. Lady's constituency was 4,483 in September 1985. Reductions in unemployment in the Cynon Valley, as elsewhere in Wales, must be tackled by policies for promoting sustained growth without inflation and attracting new industry and enterprise. As the hon. Lady may be aware, my office has written to the chief executive of the Cynon Valley borough council giving details of the substantial activities by my Department and Government agencies in support of these aims.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Secretary of State agree that the recent evidence of massive incompetence at the highest levels in the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency in relation to the Parrot Corporation will have massive implications for the attraction of jobs to Wales and the Cynon Valley, and will he please make a statement?

Mr. Edwards: I have no evidence of massive incompetence of the kind described, but I know that very considerable effort was made by the agency and by the chairman of the company to put together a refinancing package, which I approved. I have every confidence that this will give the company the prospects of a very good future, which I hope will provide jobs and lead to a successful operation.

Mr. Coleman: In view of the television programme one evening last week concerning the Parrot Corporation, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that it is incumbent on him to make a statement to the House so that the misunderstandings, perhaps, which arose from that programme can be cleared up?

Mr. Edwards: There is a parliamentary question on the Order Paper for answer later today, and I am very happy to answer questions.

Mr. Barry Jones: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will make a statement about the Parrot Corporation, as we wish to hear him. With regard to the valley communities, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that all the valleys of south-east Wales are now very much at risk both socially and economically? May I tell him that on a recent visit to the Cynon Valley I was shown by an able and determined council some of the mountainous problems faced there, especially in housing? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that by investing in more housing repair activities in the Cynon Valley he could most quickly create many new jobs? Will he give the money to the council for that type of campaign?

Mr. Edwards: I am glad to say that the local authority is just undertaking its first enveloping scheme, which we have been encouraging it to undertake in the valley. That is part of a very large package of measures which I listed

in my letter to the Cynon Valley borough council. The chief executive acknowledges in his reply that he is aware of many of the encouraging points that I made in my letter and, indeed, associates his authority with the efforts that are being made.

2. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; what were the equivalent figures in May 1979; and what is the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 September 1985 the numbers of unemployed claimants were 13,587, 30,637 and 187,563 respectively. The estimated equivalent figure for Wales in May 1979 is 77,200. On that basis, the increase to date for Wales is 143 per cent. Comparable figures for May 1979 for the Newport travel-to-work area and Gwent are not available because of the move to claimant-based figures and changes to travel-to-work-area boundaries.

Mr. Hughes: Bearing in mind those deplorable figures, does the Secretary of State appreciate the fresh consternation that has been caused in Wales over the Parrot Corporation affair, which is hardly likely to encourage new investment? When will the right hon. Gentleman face up to his departmental responsibilities and make a full public statement?

Mr. Edwards: It is a matter for encouragement that, faced by difficulties as a result of police investigations, it has been possible for the public and private sectors to put together a substantial package of refinancing. Through that package, they will go forward together to secure the future of a company that has been attracted to south Wales if every effort is not made by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and his hon. Friends to denigrate and cast doubt on it.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Assuming that the figures given by the Secretary of State are correct — I am not disputing them — another 20,000 people will be made redundant in south Wales during the next 12 months. What advice has the right hon. Gentleman given the Prime Minister to the effect that she must change her policies if unemployment is to be reduced in the next five years?

Mr. Edwards: Without understating the seriousness of the problem, when the hon. Gentleman talks about redundancies he should talk also about the substantial series of announcements made during the recess about new investment in the steel industry, and in companies that were previously threatened, such as Borg-Warner, in some of the new technology companies, in the massive redevelopment of south Cardiff, in the new package for Courtaulds in Deeside, and in many more projects. New jobs are being created and New industries and activities are being brought into existence.

Mr. Absc: The Secretary of State explained to my hon. Friends the Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), both of whom asked about the Parrot Corporation, that he has been picking up the pieces in an endeavour to help my constituency, but why did he not answer the question that they both asked him? Why does he not make a statement, as the matter is not sub judice and the right hon. Gentleman replies to me by saying that there are police inquiries? Why does he permit the Welsh Development Agency to make as many statements as it wishes to the press and television, while he remains silent? Why does he not acknowledge the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, come to the House and tell us what his guilt is?

Mr. Edwards: Here I am, on the first day back, answering freely questions put to me in the House of Commons, which is appropriate. I have answered, first, questions about refinancing. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman inferred that one of my priorities, perhaps the first, was to secure the future of the company and the jobs at stake. My other priority was to ensure that the police undertook the appropriate action in this case and that their investigation was not hampered. I have decided that there should also be an internal investigation to be carried out by an independent person into the handling of the original investment by the WDA, and its subsequent monitoring of that investment. I shall report further to the House on the details of this inquiry as soon as possible. I cannot report to the House on matters that are still the subject of a police inquiry, nor on matters which, because of that inquiry, I have not been able to investigate fully.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my right hon. Friend believe that the Labour party's proposal for a national investment bank will do anything to ease long-term unemployment in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: No, I do not, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was right to talk about investment, whether undertaken by public or private bodies, and to say that no system of supervision can be proof against deliberate fraud. Therefore, we must ensure that where there is fraud it is uncovered in a timely fashion and that evidence is acted on expeditiously.

If the possibility existed, I am sure that we were right to ensure that the police carried out investigations and that we did not interfere with those investigations. I am equally sure that it was absolutely right for the agency, the Welsh Office and the substantial private sector investors involved in this case to put together a package, as that proved possible, to secure the future of the company.

Dr. Marek: By how much will the unemployment figures increase if the new cuts at the Welsh plant breeding station take place and if the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food cuts at Cardiff and Bangor take place?

Mr. Edwards: I am not prepared to give estimates of future unemployment, but I am certain that the Welsh plant breeding station will continue to play a very important role in agricultural research programmes. It has a vital role to play in the research programmes on the western grasslands and uplands generally, not just those in Wales

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend remind the Opposition that last year Wales obtained nearly one-quarter of the jobs created by inward investment into the United Kingdom — four times as many jobs as the Opposition achieved during their last year in office?

Mr. Edwards: I am very glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the Winvest record is 150 new and expansion projects, which will create 1,100 new jobs and safeguard about 5,600 existing jobs. The Government have a very good record in this respect.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us more about the inquiry that he is initiating and who

might head it? At the appropriate time, does he think that the issue should go before the Public Accounts Committee?

Mr. Edwards: I am quite certain that the issue will go before the Public Accounts Committee and that the Committee will wish to look at it. That has never been in question. As soon as details of the inquiry have been decided, including the name of the person who is to conduct it, I shall inform the House. We are still discussing with the Treasury the precise details of the inquiry. I am therefore not in a position to give the hon. Gentleman that information this afternoon.

NHS Staff (Pay)

3. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had during the summer Adjournment with the chairmen of Welsh health authorities regarding the funding of pay increases for National Health Service staff in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): My right hon. Friend met chairmen to discuss this and other matters on 26 July, the day on which the House adjourned.

Sir Anthony Meyer: May I take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on his very well-merited appointment?

Is he aware that if local health authorities are obliged to fund nationally-agreed pay increases out of budgets which were not prepared in expectation of those increases, their ability to maintain their level of services may be impaired, including the provision of matching finance for projects for which large sums of money have been raised by local effort?

Mr. Robinson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales discussed this when he met the chairmen of health authorities on 26 July. It was agreed that health authorities could manage for the year 1985-86 within the resources available to them. Of course we recognise the difficulties when health authorities have to accept pay rises that are higher than those for which they budgeted. My right hon. Friend will continue to keep the matter under review, especially during the current public expenditure round. It would be wrong of me to look forward to 1986-87 while those discussions are taking place.

Mr. Wigley: I, too, welcome the Under-Secretary of State to his new and onerous responsibilities. I hope that he will have an enjoyable, though brief, spell in the Welsh Office.

Will the hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the meetings that had to be cancelled because of the change in ministerial responsibility, which had been arranged by his hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), will be reconvened as rapidly as possible, in particular the meeting with the Gwynedd health authority to discuss the financial position in Gwynedd arising from the impact of wage increases not being fully funded? Will he ensure that no decisions are taken in Gwynedd until that meeting has taken place and an opportunity has arisen for him to appreciate the full impact of the situation in Gwynedd?

Mr. Robinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend for their kind remarks in prefacing their questions. In response to the point raised by the hon. Gentleman, I am conscious that my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts) was due to have a series of meetings with the health authorities. We plan to go ahead with those meetings. As for any changes that may be made to the services in Gwynedd, this is a matter for that health authority to decide. I am prepared at that meeting to discuss with it any issues that may arise.

Mr. Best: May I also congratulate my hon. Friend and wish him success in his new job? He will receive much personal support from his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Is my hon. Friend aware that the National Health Service staff pay problem has put particular strain on the new hospital at Ysbyty, Gwynedd? Although that hospital provides facilities in excess of those provided previously, does he accept that when facilities are provided the public do not understand why they cannot be used to their full potential?

Mr. Robinson: We are aware of the difficulties caused by the pay settlement. However, the issue must be seen against the background of increases in resources for the health authorities. The real growth in resources for Gwynedd between 1978-79 and 1984-85 was about 30 per cent.

Mr. Allan Rogers: May I also congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment?

Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that pay increases for nurses in south Wales can be achieved only if major cuts are made in the Health Service and in facilities for patients? Is it not hypocritical of the Government to suggest that they are making extra money available when they are not even funding the full pay review award originally granted to nurses?

Mr. Robinson: Following the meeting with the chairmen of the health authorities it was made clear that the increases could be absorbed in the current year without making the changes to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Council House Sales

4. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Wales since May 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: About 43,568 council dwellings were sold to sitting tenants in Wales between May 1979 and 30 June 1985. In addition, 2,538 dwellings were sold by the Cwmbran development corporation and Mid-Wales Development.

Mr. Knox: How many complaints about delays in dealing with applications to buy have been made by tenants in the past 12 months?

Mr. Robinson: Only eight complaints about delay have been received in the past 12 months. Instances of delay are far fewer now than in the initial period following the introduction of the right-to-buy scheme. We look into each individual case that is brought to our attention. We believe that the system is working satisfactorily and we are pleased with the way in which local authorities are operating it.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister aware of the report by the chief housing officer for Wales in which he says that we need to spend £3,000 million in the next 15 years if existing council stock is not to slip into slumdom? Would that not be a better priority for the Government than their obsession with the sale of council houses?

Mr. Robinson: I have seen the chief housing officer's report and newspaper reports on the subject. Between

1979 and 1984 the Government spent £34 million annually on repairs to public sector housing compared with £17 million during the period in which the last Labour Government were in power. In the private sector we spent £46 million compared with £12 million spent when the Labour party was in office.

Mr. Best: Does my hon. Friend accept that receipts from council house sales should be used to fund further building and urgent repairs?

Mr. Robinson: As my hon. Friend knows, the receipts can be applied to many purposes. The Government are restricting the amount that can be used in the current year to 15 per cent. Local authorities are, however, able to make use of other receipts in terms of their borrowing requirement. That is also important.

Mr. Roy Hughes: I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), but remind him that after the next general election he is likely to be looking for greener pastures.

May I take this opportunity to remind the hon. Gentleman of the terrible housing crisis that is developing in Wales? This is happening at a time when thousands of our building and construction workers are standing in the dole queues and when building materials are stacked in builders yards. Selling council houses is no substitute for building houses.

Mr. Robinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks about my appointment. I remind him that there is another marginal seat in Newport, and we are looking forward to an exciting battle there.

On his point about housing stock, I must tell him that the sale of council houses in no way diminishes housing stock.

Secondary Schoolchildren

5. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the numbers of 15-year-olds attending state secondary schools in Wales in 1981 to 1985, and the estimate for 1989, respectively.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): With permission, I shall publish the figures for each year from 1981 to 1985 in the *Official Report*.

In January 1981 there were 44,659 pupils aged 15 in maintained secondary schools in Wales, and at January 1985, 42,836. The estimate for 1989 is about 36,000.

Mr. Grist: Does my hon. Friend agree that as those figures are no secret and have been known for a long time, quite a number of local authorities—including my local authority of South Glamorgan—have seriously failed to consider the merging of schools to enable the provision of a more varied range of subjects and more funding to be spent on teaching and less on mortar and bricks?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is, of course, the responsibility of each local education authority to secure the best educational provision for children in the most cost-effective way. In 1981 we advised local education authorities to take account in their planning of the declining trend in pupil numbers, when we recommended that two out of every five surplus school places should be taken out of use by 1986.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the Minister aware of the very poor level of funding available for the education of 15-year-olds in Wales, especially in a sparse county like Powys, where in many of the high schools the heads of spending departments such as physics, chemistry and French have no more than £1 per pupil per year to spend on materials? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is disgraceful?

Mr. Roberts: I cannot agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman. In Wales in general, spending per head has increased from £767 in 1978-79 to £877 in 1983-84—and that is at 1983-84 prices. There has been a similar increase in Powys from £879 to £953 per pupil. The hon. and learned Gentleman is incorrect in what he claims.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Has the Minister studied the report, published a few days ago, of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, which concludes that the overall picture is of an alarming deterioration in our schools and that no amount of statistical juggling can disguise that? Certainly our teachers and local education authorities concur with that. When will the hon. Gentleman's Department ensure that our educational services in Wales are properly funded?

Mr. Roberts: Indeed, I have a copy of the very slim document to which the hon. Gentleman referred. My description of it, quite frankly, is that it flies in the face of facts. Furthermore, it acknowledges that in its conclusions. I have no further comment on a document that states that.

Sir John Stradling Thomas: I agree with my hon. Friend and disagree with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), but do not local education authorities have a problem of resource management? Talk of cuts is political nonsense. The figures speak for themselves. They are figures put out, not by the Welsh Office, but by the LEAs. Will my hon. Friend give the assurance for which I very much hope, that he will continue to discuss with the LEAs the very difficult problem of resource management against the background of falling rolls, which is at the heart of the problem faced by LEAs in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend, whom I am glad to hear, particularly as he is so conversant with this subject, had started on these very discussions with local authorities and had met the Gwent and Clwyd local authorities. I fully intend to carry on the good work that he began and to meet the remaining local education authorities.

Following are the figures:

The number of pupils at maintained secondary schools in Wales in January of each year who were aged 15 at 31 August in the previous year was as follows:

	Number
1981	44,659
1982	43,649
1983	42,977
1984	42,500
1985	42,836

From mid-year home population projections it is estimated that the corresponding figure for 1989 will be about 36,000.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the number of school leavers

registered as job seekers in Rhymney Valley, Mid-Glamorgan and Wales at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On 12 September 1985 the number of school leavers under 18 years of age in Rhymney Valley, Mid-Glamorgan and Wales who had not entered employment since completing full-time education were 624, 2,712 and 11,327 respectively. Many will find employment or return to full-time education. For the remainder, there is a guarantee of the offer by Christmas of a place on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Davies: Does the Minister accept that, according to the October figures, 1,500 young people are registered as job seekers in Rhymney Valley and that in Mid-Glamorgan as a whole there are about 7,000? Is he aware that for those 1,500 in Rhymney Valley there is one vacancy at the careers office and that for the 7,000 in Mid-Glamorgan only 17 vacancies are registered with the careers service? In the light of those figures, will the Minister dissociate himself entirely from the view of the vice-chairman of the Conservative party, Mr. Jeffrey Archer, that the problem with young people is that they will not do a day's work and that they should get off their backsides and find a job?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are very concerned about the high number of unemployed school leavers that appear at this time of year on the register and account for a considerable part of the increase. Indeed, they are responsible for about 5,530 of those registered in Wales. However, I am glad to say that that number is 701 fewer than last September's figure. There are consolations for these young people, because I am glad to say that vacancies are up, being 1,500 higher this September than in September 1984. While we still regard the figures as being too high, there is hope for every youngster who has left school and is now without a job.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Minister now answer the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and say whether he dissociates himself entirely from the insulting remarks of the vice-chairman of the Tory party, Mr. Jeffrey Archer, which caused a great deal of anger and bitterness among the young people in our community?

Mr. Roberts: I did not hear the vice-chairman's remarks. I have only seen them reported and, as often as not, I am sure, reported totally out of context. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I have my own views, which I have declared, about young people who are unemployed in any part of Wales. While we are deeply concerned about their predicament, their prospects are somewhat better now than they were a year ago.

Wages Councils

8. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any representations on the effect upon Welsh workers of the Government's proposed abolition of wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department has received eight letters direct and a further 19 have been passed on by hon. Members. I have also received a petition with 96 signatures. In the light of the views expressed during the consultation exercise about wages councils, the Government announced on 17 July that they were to be retained but reformed. Legislation will shortly be brought before the House.

Mr. Coleman: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for being good enough to write to me on this matter. Does he think that the people of Wales will swallow his explanation and accept that new jobs will be created if we remove the minimal protection that is enjoyed by low-paid workers? Does this mean that the Welsh unemployed can look forward to jobs that are low paid without regulated protection?

Mr. Edwards: No. There is clear evidence from this and many other countries that high initial rates of pay as employees enter industry without skills result in more unemployed youngsters. Labour Members have expressed concern in previous supplementary questions about unemployed youngsters. They should take serious note of the fact that these youngsters are more likely to get jobs if they start at lower rates. They will then have better prospects for the future. To discount the overwhelming evidence of that fact is not to do any service for those of whom Labour Members speak.

Mr. Grist: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Germany young workers start at rates between 20 per cent. and 25 per cent. of an adult wage and ultimately secure far higher paid jobs than British workers?

Mr. Edwards: That is true. There is no doubt that high basic rates for youngsters in relation to rates for adults are a key factor in deciding whether firms take on young people. There is no doubt also that the rates that have been paid to youngsters have been a factor in discouraging their employment. We should do everything that we can to bring them into work where they can be trained and where they can earn much higher rates in future.

Mr. Ray Powell: Does the Secretary of State realise that the wages councils protect about 500,000 employees and that one out of five of those who are protected are young people? Does he understand that they have suffered enough under this Government and that they do not want to return to sweatshops? I ask the right hon. Gentleman and the Government to reconsider their decision to recommend the abolition of the wages councils.

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman had listened he would have heard me say that we shall not abolish the wages councils. If he wishes to talk about the protection of young people, I must put it to him that those who do not have jobs are not being protected by the wages councils. Indeed, their prospects of employment are being threatened by many of the actions of the councils. That is what we are seeking to change.

NHS Expenditure

9. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales for each fiscal year since 1978 in 1985 prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: As the answer contains a number of figures I shall, with permission, circulate it in the *Official Report*. But, taking account of general inflation, as measured by the GDP market price deflator,

expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales at 1984-85 prices rose from £710·8 million in 1978-79 to £862·0 million in 1984-85.

Mr. Thomas: How does the Minister equate the propaganda from his Department and the Department of Health and Social Security about maintaining the level of expenditure in the NHS with the real experience of those of us who during the recess have visited hospitals, spoken to Health Service workers and had the privilege of attending massive public meetings in our constituencies and elsewhere at which objections have been raised to proposals for hospital closures and changes in the ambulance service? Why are health authorities in Wales going through these consultation exercises on closure proposals if there is not a real financial crisis in the NHS?

Mr. Robinson: The consultations to which the hon. Gentleman refers are part of the management process of health authorities in organising their priorities. He should know that five major hospital schemes have been completed since 1979, which is evidence of the Government's commitment and that of my right hon. Friend to the NHS in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Will my hon. Friend accept that there is a warm welcome for the expansion of the NHS, especially the significant increase in bone marrow transplant operations at the University hospital of Wales in my constituency?

Mr. Robinson: The answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes. My right hon. Friend made an announcement on 17 October confirming the plan to set up a bone marrow transplant unit at the University hospital of Wales. This is an enormously important activity and we shall be monitoring the initiative closely.

Mr. Barry Jones: I congratulate the Under-Secretary of State on his appointment, and I thank his predecessor for his courtesy. Will the Under-Secretary of State heed the SOS from Mid-Glamorgan, Gwynedd and South Glamorgan? Are not patient services at risk? Should not more cash be made available to the health authorities in Wales?

Mr. Robinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. He has referred to the shortage of resources for health authorities in Wales. I said earlier that Gwynedd's resources had increased by 30 per cent. Mid-Glamorgan's resources have increased by 19 per cent. The first phase of the Deloitte report has been completed and the Mid-Glamorgan health authority will have to consider it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will monitor the position closely.

Following are the figures:

The expenditure on the NHS in Wales at 1984-85 prices is as follows:

Year	*Expenditure (£m)*
1978-79	710·8
1979-80	712·0
1980-81	770·8
1981-82	798·0
1982-83	819·9
1983-84	833·0
1984-85	862·0

Actual expenditure has been adjusted to take account of general inflation as measured by the GDP market price deflator.

Courtaulds Plant, Greenfield

10. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions between his Department and Delyn borough council on Government measures to alleviate the effects of the closure of the Courtaulds plant at Greenfield.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Full agreement has been reached between the Delyn borough council, the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Office about the detailed implementation of the package of assistance which I announced in June this year. With the very welcome recent announcement by Courtaulds of its contribution to the total effort in the area I look forward to rapid progress on the agreed programme.

I am pleased to announce that a further £200,000 urban programme capital allocation is to be made available to Delwyn borough council for the further development of the Greenfield site for a major European company, subject to that company locating at the site. For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot say more at this stage.

Mr. Raffan: I thank my right hon. Friend, and through him the Prime Minister, for the pressure that they brought to bear on Courtaulds to produce its comprehensive regeneration package for Greenfield. I thank my right hon. Friend also for today's announcement, which will be welcomed in my constituency, and for the Government's contribution to the regeneration of the Greenfield site. This will create a healthy private and public sector partnership. Can my right hon. Friend give a commitment with respect to the necessary continued urban aid and capital allocation support in the longer term so that we can speedily build on the foundations that have been so successfully laid?

Mr. Edwards: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments on the intervention by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself. I am grateful to the chairman of Courtaulds for having listened to what we said and for responding in a way that has earned the congratulations and thanks of the local authorities involved. I think that my hon. Friend can be assured by what we have done so far and our announcement this afternoon that in reaching our decisions we shall continue to take full account of the changing situation in the area.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Parsonages and Bishops' Palaces

22. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much was spent on the dilapidations of *(a)* parsonages and *(b)* bishops' palaces during the past year; and if he will make a statement.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing Church Commissioners (Sir William van Straubenzee): The 1984 figures for parsonages are £7·7 million and for diocesan bishops' houses £338,000.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend assure me that the considerable sums spent on parsonages and bishops' palaces, which in 1984 included £70,000 on the palace of the Bishop of Durham, will ensure that there are adequate study facilities for all parsons and bishops, to enable more of them to comment on moral rather than political issues, including the narrow decision last week by the Law Lords to abolish the age of consent?

Sir William van Straubenzee: All parsonages and bishops' houses have provision for studies. I do not think that it would be in accordance with the general attitude of the clergy if the Church of England tried to ordain or lay down the thinking that should take place in their studies. Total expenditure on Auckland castle is much greater than my hon. Friend has indicated, because of the historic nature of that ancient place.

Stipendiary Ministry (Pay, Pensions and Housing)

23. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if there are any plans to increase the amount of the commissioners' income applied towards the support of the pay, pensions and housing of the stipendiary ministry of the Church of England.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Yes. We were able to increase the income we applied towards the pay, pensions and housing of stipendiary ministers of the Church of England by 8·5 per cent. in 1984 and a further increase of 8·6 per cent. will have occurred in 1985. Similar increases are planned in future years. In all, over 80 per cent. of our income is used for these purposes.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. First, I welcome the fact that the Church Commissioners are paying more than the rate of inflation to support the ministry and the pay of incumbents. Does he agree that some anxiety should be shown, because about 1,000 members of the clergy have given notice that they will leave the Church of England if women are ordained and admitted to the priesthood? Will he confirm that special consideration will be given to keeping those members and the rest of the clergy happy, because we do not wish to lose more members of the clergy?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners' duty is to make moneys available for the remuneration of the full-time clergy. As my hon. Friend is aware, more than half the overall burden, including pensions, is now also carried by the laity. I do not believe that considerations of what will happen in the future enter into that calculation. My hon. Friend is now uniquely well placed to make his views known because of the welcome news that since we last met he has been elected to the General Synod.

Mr. Cormack: When my hon. Friend and his colleagues next discuss these matters, will they give further thought to the compulsory retirement age of 70, bearing in mind the fact that many men who are just over 70 are well able to look after a small rural parish, and that mother Church is often better served by a resident father than by a peripatetic priest of whatever sex?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. I listened carefully to what he said. The difficulty is, as he will know from close experiece, that there are few instances where one man looks after one fairly small rural parish. That is not the experience that most of us share. The work is demanding physically and mentally.

St. Alban's Church, Teddington

24. **Mr. Jessel** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the current position in relation to the redundant church of St. Alban's, Teddington.

Sir William van Straubenzee: At the invitation of the commissioners, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has decided to hold a non-statutory public local inquiry into the proposed demolition of this building. The inquiry will be held on 22-23 January next year.

Mr. Jessel: Can my hon. Friend give the latest official estimate of the cost of putting St. Alban's into a safe, sound and decent condition and of obtaining a fund to keep it that way? Is he aware that there are signs that the Greater London council might put up £300,000 towards it? Would that be anything like enough?

Sir William van Straubenzee: My hon. Friend will understand that I must be careful to say nothing that will prejudice the inquiry. I have seen published figures which show that the cost, as at January 1985 prices, including VAT and fees, of putting the building into repair is between £800,000 and £1 million. My hon. Friend can well judge from that what any projected contributions would achieve.

WALES

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are jobless; how many were jobless in May 1979; and by how much the jobless have increased since 1979 expressed as a percentage and as a total.

16. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unemployment figures for Wales; and how this compares with the same period in 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 September 1985 there were 187,563 unemployed claimants in Wales. The estimated equivalent figures for May 1979 and September 1979 are 77,220 and 79,600. The percentage increases are 143 per cent. and 135·6 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Jones: On the subject of the Parrot Corporation, will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that, through the usual channels, he will discuss the judicial figure whom we expect to head the inquiry which the right hon. Gentleman announced earlier today during Question Time? Regarding the disgraceful and frightening unemployment figures, can he tell the House why he has been prepared to join the infamous star chamber committee? Is he not the Prime Minister's chief hatchet man?

Mr. Edwards: On the first point, we are dealing with an internal inquiry. I do not believe that the form of consultation suggested by the hon. Gentleman would be appropriate. Matters that could involve the judiciary are already subject to normal police investigation. On the subject of public expenditure, I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that we are interested in the choice and allocation of priorities and that he would welcome the fact that the Minister who has a wide area of responsibility should be taking part in those decisions.

Dr. Marek: Does the Secretary of State realise that these figures are the worst ever for the Principality, and that it is wearing the patience of Welsh people thin in that the Government appear to be doing nothing at all to try to ease the burden of unemployment levels? When will the Secretary of State pursue policies that will genuinely bring down the level of unemployment? Why is he pursuing policies that will increase unemployment, through closures at MAFF at Cardiff and Bangor and the Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth?

Mr. Edwards: For four years now we have seen growth of over 3 per cent. per annum. Within Wales, and particularly in areas such as those represented by the hon. Gentleman, we have seen substantial public sector effort. Public sector investment in the Clwyd area since this Government came into office amounts to some £350 million. The hon. Gentleman ought to know that Wrexham is now proving to be one of the most attractive areas for investment in Britain.

The hon. Gentleman should welcome, for example, the decision of Hilton Mining to take over the former Firestone factory, which promises up to 350 jobs, the further investment to be undertaken by Sharp and others in the area, and the fact that considerable proportion of those recently made redundant by Courtaulds have already found jobs. The hon. Member should welcome those indications that our policy is working.

THE ARTS

Regional Arts Associations

25. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Minister for the Arts what recent representations he has had on the allocation of resources to regional arts associations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts was taken ill today and I am standing in for him at short notice. He sends his apologies to the House.

My hon. Friend met the chairmen and directors of all the regional arts associations on 18 October. He has also received a deputation from Merseyside arts bodies, and has corresponded with representatives of other regions. The allocation of resources is a matter for the Arts Council.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will convey to his hon. Friend our regret that he is unwell. We particularly wish to assist him in his new task. Is the Minister aware that in West Yorkshire, as in other metropolitan areas, there is worry about what will happen when the metropolitan county councils are abolished? When will the Minister respond to the Arts Council's bid for £35 million to replace the metropolitan county money, and what further guidance is to be given via the rate support grant formula to assist district councils in developing their arts funding?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to the hon. Member for his kind words about my hon. Friend. I spoke to my hon. Friend a few minutes ago and I found him very much like Florestan at the beginning of the second act of Fidelio. I am sure that he will recover. On the second point, my hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement about the allocations for next year, in December. On the matter of post-abolition funding, as the hon. Member knows, we have already committed £34 million of additional central funding for the arts after abolition. The Arts Council subsequently made a bid for more resources, which we will have to consider in the context of the public expenditure discussions. As I think the hon. Member will know, that will have to await the broader considerations that are being discussed at the moment.

Mr. Nelson: Since my hon. Friend is in such close and frequent contact with the newly appointed Minister for the Arts, may I ask him to transmit the message that many of us hope that he will be rather more a champion at the Chancellor's door than a supplicant and defendant in the star chamber?

Sir George Young: Of course I shall pass on those sentiments. No one wishes my hon. Friend a speedy recovery more than I do.

Mr. Buchan: We are all pleased to learn that at least the Minister for the Arts is in a better condition than I fear most of the arts are. We pass on our good wishes, and no doubt we shall meet him in a few weeks' time. Will the Under-Secretary of State remind him that the arts crisis, the cataclysmic collapse in arts funding, is the worst ever? Will he also remind him that this is due to the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC? Thirdly, will he remind his hon. Friend of the promise given to me on 2 August last year by the previous Minister that the present level of public support for the arts would be maintained? When are we to get that assurance from the present Minister?

Sir George Young: I reject the assumption behind the hon. Gentleman's question. In our manifesto in 1983 we said that we would keep up the level of support for the arts, and our record shows that we have done better than that. From 1978-79 to date the central Government arts budget has more than doubled in cash terms, that is, a real terms increase of nearly 18 per cent. This year's budget is almost 6 per cent. up in cash terms on last year's budget. In the context of the very difficult decisions that the Government have had to take on public expenditure, the arts have done quite well.

Private Sponsorship

26. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Minister for the Arts what response he has received to the publications issued by the Office of Arts and Libraries to stimulate private sponsorship of the arts.

Sir George Young: I am delighted to say that the business sponsorship incentive scheme continues to be highly successful. It has brought £5·5 million of new money into the arts since it began a year ago, £4 million from businesses, to which £1·5 million has been added under the scheme. The House will be glad to know that, in view of the success of the scheme, my hon. Friend is transferring an extra £250,000 to it to meet the demand. He is today announcing 57 more awards in respect of over £800,000 new sponsorship; the new list includes 54 brand new sponsors from all parts of the country.

Mr. Murphy: Will my hon. Friend convey to the new Minister the good wishes of Conservative Members and our regret that he is indisposed? Will my hon. Friend also convey our congratulations on the stimulation of the arts,

which has been an admirable feature of the Government's record since they came to power and is further evidenced by this afternoon's announcement? Will my hon. Friend guarantee that such matters will be given the correct amount of publicity, because that will help to stimulate the arts further?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. The scheme has done more than anything previously to raise public awareness of business sponsorship schemes. The arts organisations are enthusiastically selling the scheme to sponsors, but I shall raise with my hon. Friend the Minister the subject of publicity, to see whether more might be done.

Mr. Tony Banks: I should like to be associated with the good wishes being sent to the new Minister, and I recommend that in future he should not eat in restaurants recommended by Lord Gowrie.

How much business sponsorship does the Under-Secretary think will be necessary to keep open the South Bank, particularly the Royal Festival Hall, if the money that the Arts Council is asking for is not forthcoming from the Government?

Sir George Young: I am confident that under the new regime that we have announced the South Bank will be run responsibly and efficiently and that some of the scares raised by the GLC will be shown to be unrealistic.

National Heritage Fund

27. **Mr. Adley** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will estimate the number of hours spent by officials of the Office of Arts and Libraries on matters relating to the National Heritage Fund in the last 12 months.

Sir George Young: The National Heritage Memorial Fund is an autonomous body administered by its own staff. Government responsibility for it is shared between the Department of the Environment and Office of Arts and Libraries. The responsibilities of the Office of Arts and Libraries in relation to the fund take up a small amount of the time of my hon. Friend's staff, which cannot readily be quantified.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Bearing in mind that he has various hats, can he confirm that funds are and will be available for appropriate railway structures, including the Ribble head viaduct and, under another hat, will be ensure that the future of the Settle-Carlisle line is kept in mind by the bodies with which he has contact?

Sir George Young: There is nothing to prevent the NHMF from funding railway-related projects, and I was pleased to see that in 1983-84 a grant from the fund saved the Haymarket train shed in Edinburgh, which is now in Bo'ness.

As my hon. Friend knows, British Rail proposed the closure of the Settle-Carlisle line and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has a quasi-statutory role, which makes it difficult for Ministers to say anything at the moment. However, I assure my hon. Friend that the heritage and tourist aspects of the line will be taken into account when my hon. Friend makes his decision.

Private Sponsorship

28. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will report on take-up of the pound-for-pound matching scheme for arts sponsorship; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Since 1 April 1985, £1·5 million has come in new sponsorship. Of this, £700,000 has come from 112 first-time sponsors taking part in the pound-for-pound matching scheme.

Mr. Freud: Does the Minister agree that the statistics that he has just given, together with those that he gave earlier to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy), show what a tremendous value-for-money exercise it is to match private sponsors with public money? Does he accept that it is counter-productive not to invest more money in the scheme, because the amount of work that it takes to hook a potential sponsor and the damage done by losing him if there is insufficient money will do little to futher the scheme?

Sir George Young: I agree with that, which is why I have just announced a further £250,000 for the scheme. One of the beneficiaries of the scheme has been Jill Freud and company, which won an award of £4,000 for a production of "Under Milk Wood", touring south and east England and Wales at the moment.

Mr. Freud: Bournemouth this week.

Sir George Young: On the current list of winners is the Ettrick Shepherds Festival, sponsored by Mrs. David Steel, so it would appear that the Liberal party has done quite well from this Government initiative.

Mr. Crouch: Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable achievements of regional opera in this country, not least the resounding success of Kent Opera in no less a place than my constituency's Canterbury Festival this year, and will he continue to see that regional opera is given generous support?

Sir George Young: The regional allocations of funds is primarily a matter for the Arts Council, but I shall make sure that the council is aware of the enthusiastic support that my hon. Friend has mentioned for the arts in Kent, and particularly in Canterbury.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

3.31 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the cancellation of the meeting between himself and representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement in Aqaba on 20 September, it was agreed that my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would receive a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation led by the Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and including two Palestinian delegates whose names had been put forward on the understanding that they personally supported a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and were opposed to terrorism and violence. Our ambassador at Amman negotiated with the Jordanian Prime Minister the text of the statement which it was agreed would be issued by the delegation after their talks in London.

Unfortunately, after their arrival in London, one of the Palestinian members of the delegation said that he could not accept a specific reference in the agreed statement to Israel's right to exist. We concluded that in these circumstances the meetings with the joint delegation could not take place.

We are deeply disappointed by this setback but remain convinced that the international community must be ready to encourage those who are working for a peaceful settlement in the middle east.

Mr. Beith: Since many people doubted whether it was realistic to expect the PLO representatives formally to denounce violence and to accept Israel's rights at such an early stage in the peace process, should not the Government have insisted on publicising any agreement that they made at the time that they made it rather than relying on unpublicised and later deals made through the Jordanians? Do such statements not, in any case, look meaningless while a substantial section of the PLO is clearly trying to overturn the peace process with such acts of violence as the Cyprus murders and the murder of Mr. Klinghoffer? Do the Government believe that those Palestinian leaders who genuinely want peace had much freedom to renounce violence after the Israeli bombing of Tunis? Will the Government now devote their efforts to persuading the Soviet and American leaderships to devote their attention to the middle east crisis which clearly represents a threat to both of them as well as to the rest of the world?

Mr. Renton: We have received an unequivocal assurance from Amman that all the members of the delegation were prepared to sign the text of the statement. We concluded that it was better to continue our negotiations through one channel only to Amman rather than through a multitude of channels. I take the hon. Member's point about the terrorist incidents and about the extremist elements in the PLO, but we took the view that moderates, be they Palestinian, Israeli or Jordanian, should be encouraged, in the hope of moving forward the peace process. That remains our position.

Obviously, we must now take stock as to how this process can be carried further forward. The main influence lies not with us but with the United States, Jordan and Israel. Nevertheless, anything that we can do in due course to help the process forward we shall do.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Is my hon. Friend aware that I was severely critical of the Government when they put forward the Venice declaration, which, in my view, was flawed because it gave unconditional recognition to the PLO as a necessary negotiating partner? May I congratulate them on this occasion, in that they made the degree of recognition that a meeting with the Foreign Secretary would have involved strictly conditional on the renunciation of violence and the acceptance of the appropriate United Nations declarations? Am I not right in thinking that in no way were the PLO representatives prepared to subscribe to those declarations? Indeed, have we not been put absolutely in the clear by King Hussein? Am I not right in thinking that it is the PLO which has lost credibility as well as the military power and political unity that it once had, and that in this matter Her Majesty's Government have behaved themselves absolutely correctly?

Mr. Renton: I thank my right hon. Friend for his remarks. I should like to correct him on one point. Bishop Khoury and Mr. Milhem came here not as representatives of the PLO but as members of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. That is an important distinction to continue to make. The only people who can take comfort from the failure of the talks last Monday are extremists on both sides. It is against that background that I support my right hon. Friend's remarks. I hope that moderates will think further as to how the process can be carried forward.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Whatever possessed the Foreign Secretary to believe that members of the PLO would ever renounce violence and grant Israel the right to live freely within firm frontiers? If he ever believed that, he must believe that pigs will fly?

Mr. Renton: I think that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman might regret some of those remarks. The fact is that we were supporting an initiative that King Hussein had started in February, which was an attempt to break the log jam in the current middle east process. We believed strongly that that was a risk for peace that was worth taking. I assure the hon. Gentleman again that the specific words that I have used — we were assured by the Jordanians — had been accepted by the Palestinian delegates before they came here. Against that background, I have no regrets that we entered into that process, accepting always that there is a risk in trying to obtain peace, not least in the middle east.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary's decision to refuse to meet the PLO representatives, who have clearly shown that they could not deliver a deal even if they wanted to. Will my hon. Friend ensure that when the Prime Minister meets Mr. Peres in New York this week she will advocate that there should be immediate direct negotiations between King Hussein and the Israelis?

Mr. Renton: I note what my hon. Friend says. I respect and understand his close interest in this matter. We of course look forward to the visit of Mr. Peres, the Israeli

Prime Minister, here in January. However, with regard to direct talks between the Israelis and Jordan, we cannot be oblivious of the position of King Hussein. We have to think of the practicalities for that king, who is in many ways the leader of the moderates in the Arab world, of entering into such direct talks.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If the renunciation of violence is to be the overriding criterion determining whether those meetings take place, what advice will the Minister give to his own Back Benchers, Conservative Members of Parliament who regularly visit the middle east, and who meet PLO people, as I did with them four years ago? If it is good enough for them to meet representatives of the PLO in all-party delegations, why is it not good enough for the Government?

Mr. Renton: I thought that I had explained to the hon. Member who asked the question the precise reasons why we could not meet the joint Jordanian-Palestian delegation —a decision that has been welcomed by hon. Members. On the further point raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) I should make it clear that renunciation of violence and terrorism was not the only point in the statement that had been agreed. In it also was the balance of recognition between Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised borders and the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Those were the twin pillars of the statement and both were very important.

Rev Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I support the Government in their action, but I ask whether the Minister is aware that the people of Northern Ireland find it extremely strange that the Government take that action when the Government are currently compelling elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland to sit down with the terrorists in the councils of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Renton: I see absolutely no analogy whatever between the position of the IRA, for example, and that of the PLO. I understand that Sinn Fein, which is the political arm of the IRA, holds some 10 per cent. of votes in Northern Ireland elections. I should point out that the Palestinians in the occupied territories have no right to vote in Israel at present and have no seats in the Knesset.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Minister forgive us for being a little puzzled about his statement? Are we to understand that an agreement was made some months ago in Amman to the effect that there would be a specific communiqué after the London talks regardless of what had happened at those talks? Is it normal Foreign Office practice to agree a statement to be made after talks some months before the talks take place, and will the Minister clarify exactly who agreed to what? With whom was the agreement reached that there should be that particular form of words?

Mr. Renton: I should dearly like some day to make a statement with which the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) could find himself in full accord and harmony. I hope that that will one day be my pleasure. I will give him the answer. I made it quite clear in my statement, and a study of the facts will certainly make it clear, that what the Prime Minister agreed in her announcement in Aqaba on 20 September was the willingness of the Foreign Secretary to meet the joint delegation and the broad principles of what that delegation would say. Subsequently there was much discussion between ourselves and the Jordanian Government, including the Jordanian Prime Minister, as to precisely what the agreed text should be. I think that the date on which the agreed text was agreed——

Mr. Dalyell: By whom?

Mr. Renton: The agreed text was agreed between ourselves and the Jordanian Government on the understanding, as I have already told the House, that all members of the delegation were willing to go along with it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When?

Mr. Renton: Speaking from memory, it was agreed on 10 October.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Notwithstanding the negative carping of some Opposition Members and notwithstanding the initial setback, having taken stock of the present position will my hon. Friend assure the House that the Government will do everything in their power to move towards another peace initiative in the middle east which will be acceptable both to the Israeli people and to moderate Arab and Palestinian opinion?

Mr. Renton: Yes. I thank my hon. Friend for those words. When I met King Hussein in London last Wednesday it was precisely to discuss the next steps forward. That was one of the main purposes of our meeting. It is clearly right that we should all take stock at the present time, but we would certainly be willing to give further help that we usefully can to the middle east peace process.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): What began as a courageous initiative by the Prime Minister—a risk for peace—has ended in total diplomatic shambles. Is the Minister seriously claiming that no blame whatever attaches to the Government in this? Is it not true that Mr. Mohammed Milhem was never directly or personally asked about the document and, if so, was there not an unrealistic assumption on the part of the Government that the Jordanians could speak on his behalf—in effect, very poor preparation on the part of the Government—with the effect that the Government have managed to annoy both pro and anti-Arafat elements in the PLO and damage the Mubarak-Hussein peace process possibly beyond repair? How much of that was due to intense American pressure to cancel the meetings?

Mr. Renton: I disagree with much of what the hon. Gentleman said. I do not accept that the Foreign Office has any blame in this regard. I remind the hon. Gentleman that both the Jordanian delegation and the Jordanian king made it plain that not only was our version of the facts correct, but that, in the words of the Jordanian king, we had acted very honourably.

I know that Mr. Milhem, to pick out one of the hon. Gentleman's points, has subsequently said that he never saw the text of the statement. We cannot know whether he did, because we were relying on one source of negotiation — the Jordanian Government. The Prime Minister agreed to this meeting on their initiative. Anyone who knows the complexities of the middle east will know that for us to accept negotiations through many diverse channels would have confounded the matter, or at least made it very confused indeed.

[Mr. Renton]

On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I can assure him and the House that no pressure whatsoever was put on us by the Americans. Far from it. Mr. Shultz, the Secretary of State, welcomed the Prime Minister's decision to receive the Jordanian-Palestinian mission.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Private notice questions are an extension of Question Time. We have had 15 minutes on this one, and, in view of the other business before us, we must move on.

Oral Questions

3.46 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this point of order arise directly out of questions?

Mr. Powell: Yes, Mr. Speaker it does. I have raised a similar point of order with you before, and I raise it again so that I may have your guidance on it. It concerns the time allocated for Welsh questions. We reached only question No. 11 today. Question No. 12 was mine, and it was on a very important matter affecting the Ogmore constituency — unemployment — which is rife throughout south but particularly in Ogmore. A further question had been partially dealt with by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot go beyond that because that would be an extension of Question Time. I realise that we did not get far in Welsh questions. That was because I made a judgment, in which I hope that I was correct, that the Parrot Corporation issue was of considerable importance to a number of hon. Members. Therefore, I allowed a rather long run of questions on it. In fairness, I called the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) on question number 8, and I thought that he made rather a good contribution.

Mr. Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that, as the Leader of the House is here, he will undertake to consider whether we may have an extension of time for Welsh Questions beyond the current 35 minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is patently not a matter for me, although I have sympathy with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask about the propriety of the Secretary of State's behaviour. In answering the many questions about the Parrot Corporation, he left a firm impression that an independent inquiry was to be appointed. By that it was understood by everybody, I am certain, that the inquiry would be independent of the Secretary of State, the Welsh Office and the WDA. However, as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, when my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) pressed the point, he was told that the inquiry was to be internal. By its very nature, that will be a whitewash.

I appreciate that that is not a matter for you, but I ask about the propriety of a right hon. Member either deliberately or inadvertently misleading the House into believing that an inquiry will be independent when, by the end of questions, it was abundantly clear that nothing of the kind was to take place. My second point is that I hope that you will not discourage the Secretary of State from making the statement that he has refused to make up to now which would clarify this issue and, I hope, the whole of the miserable Parrot issue.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that very much of that point of order has anything to do with me. It is entirely a matter for the Government as to whether statements are made.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In Question Time, the Secretary of State for Wales described the inquiry as "independent". How can an internal inquiry be independent? Why cannot the Secretary of State ensure

that a judicial figure heads the inquiry? We fear a whitewash. We wish to hear the Secretary of State putting things right.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not good practice to continue Question Time by means of points of order. None of that is a matter for me.

Business of the House

3.51 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement. The Business for Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 October will now be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER — Opposition day (20th Allotted day); until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on the crisis in southern Africa followed by a debate on the need for an independent judicial inquiry into the recent urban disturbances. Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Committee of Public Accounts to which the Government have replied.

Commons consideration of Lords amendments to the Water (Fluoridation) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Housing Bill *(Lords)*, the Housing Associations' Bill *(Lords)*, the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill *(Lords)*, the Landlord and Tenant Bill *(Lords)* and the Weights and Measures Bill *(Lords)*, which are all consolidation measures.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I thank the Leader of the House for making that business statement. In view of the Prime Minister's extraordinary and damaging antics at the Commonwealth conference, her apparent change of stance on the question of economic sanctions against South Africa, her agreement, with Commonwealth colleagues, to impose sanctions last night and her scornful dismissal of the same agreement this morning, can we have an early statement to clarify what the Government's policy really is, certainly before Wednesday's debate on South Africa?

Secondly, while we are to have a statement later today on the inner cities, given the scale and gravity of the disorders in which four people have died, hundreds have been injured and tens of millions of pounds' worth of property destroyed, is it not disgraceful that the Government have not rearranged this week's business so that we could have a full day's debate in Government time instead of having to rely upon half a day in Opposition time?

Thirdly, now that the Secretary of State for Employment is no longer a Member of this House, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early statement to be made or, better still, provide time for us to debate this unprecedented, unsatisfactory and, to this House, insulting arrangement? Can he at least ensure that the new Secretary of State does not continue to offload his responsibilities for answering questions on unemployment in the other place, as he did last Tuesday, when the Minister of State for Defence deputised for him? It is reported that he intends to do so again tomorrow.

Finally, given the strong views that are held on fluoridation, can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that no guillotine will be applied to curtail the debate next Thursday?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman earns, properly, the affection of all parts of the House, but he is one of the most reactionary people ever to have sat on the Opposition Benches. It is extraordinary if, within our constitutional arrangements, it is not possible for the Secretary of State for Employment to sit in the other place when that Department and its responsibilities are also represented in this place at Cabinet level. May I say to him—since I am, as ever, conciliatory in such matters — that of course his request can be considered through the usual channels.

We have all come back desperate to fashion our ploughshares into swords, but to describe the Prime Minister's stout championing of the national interest at the Commonwealth conference in that way shows a little unnatural bellicosity. I shall inquire about the possibility of an early statement by the Prime Minister about the conference.

As to a debate on the inner cities, I recognise the House's good fortune in that the Opposition day on Wednesday is to be partly devoted to that topic. Like the right hon. Gentleman, I recognise its importance. On Thursday, we have to consider eight Lords amendments to the Water (Fluoridation) Bill. They do not involve any new matters of substance and I hope that the House will be able to address itself to them fully but responsibly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: This is a business statement, not business questions, and therefore supplementary questions must be related to what the Leader of the House has just said.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Public Accounts Committee debate on Thursday will draw particular attention to six of the matters contained in its report so that the House might be aware of the topics that are of particular interest to the Committee and therefore to the House? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Order Paper will contain reference to vehicle excise duty and its evasion, the sale of Government shareholdings in nationalised industries, the effectiveness or otherwise of regional industrial incentives, housing benefits, the control of nationalised industries and the serious shortcomings in the dental service?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, I can confirm that that is the proposal. I thank the right hon. Gentleman for the part that he has played in making this come about.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Is it not intolerable that so serious a matter as southern Africa, which seems to have occupied much of the discussion at the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference, should be considered only until 7 o'clock? If the Opposition think it important, had we not better give it a whole day?

Mr. Biffen: No. We are at that time in a Parliament when the time available is at a great premium. The House is indebted to the Opposition in this respect. I am certain that the matter will come before the House when the Prime Minister returns and, more particularly, when we debate the Queen's Speech.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Would it not have been more appropriate for the Government to make time available for a debate on southern Africa when the Prime Minister was here to answer for the fact that she has now accepted the Reagan economic sanction package on South Africa? Since the Prime Minister spends most of her time trying to line up the Government behind every initiative taken by President Reagan, would it not be helpful for the House to understand why she took so many months to do that on this occasion?

Mr. Biffen: With an effortless air of superiority the right hon. Gentleman is able to make his point about the Prime Minister and the policies for which she stands. I believe that all these matters can most appropriately be debated in the context of the report that the Prime Minister will make to the House and in the debate on the Queen's Speech that will follow shortly.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is it not the case that the matter will have to come before the House in Government time because many of the specific sanctions imposed on top of those that which are part of the European Community package will have to be approved by the House? I think in particular of action under the Sale of Goods Act to prevent certain trading transactions. Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who have serious misgivings about the wisdom or effectiveness of imposing sanctions on any country will welcome the opportunity to express their views?

Mr. Biffen: I am not in possession of sufficient facts to enable me to say authoritatively that my hon. Friend is right about the need for legislation, but his general point must be correct.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): Is the Leader of the House aware that many Opposition Members found deeply offensive his response to the remarks by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) about the Secretary of State for Employment being in another place? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that 800 redundancies in consumer electronics have been declared in my constituency in the last week? Is it not a disgrace that the Secretary of State for Employment cannot come to the House to answer questions on this subject?

Mr. Biffen: There is a Cabinet Minister sitting in this House who is fully able to deal with these points, and the hon. Gentleman knows that perfectly well.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Labour Members find it an outrage that at a time when 4 million people are unemployed, the Secretary of State for Employment does not sit in this House to answer for the Government? Will he give a categorical undertaking that if there are any statements on employment matters on Wednesday or Thursday of this week—or, indeed, at any other time—they will not be made in the other place before being given in this House?

Mr. Biffen: As I said to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), these sort of matters can reasonably be discussed through the ususal channels. I want to say again that, once upon a time, those on the democratic end of the spectrum in public life believed in the doctrine of the man for the job. If there is someone who—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes—*[Interruption.]* If we believe—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Biffen: I believe that it is perfectly possible for these matters to be properly concluded when a Cabinet Minister representing the interests of that Department sits in this House.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement on what the Prime Minister has been discussing at the Heads of Government Commonwealth conference. However, does he believe that the withering condescension with which the Prime Minister described the package of proposals for sanctions on the radio this morning will have done anything but comfort those in the Botha regime in South Africa?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the effectiveness of the package, which many of us doubt, will be discussed again in the months ahead so that we can be sure that everything possible is being done to give support to those fighting for the right of the the majority in South Africa to have a say in the running of their country?

Mr. Biffen: I can say without any equivocation that the decisions reached at the conference will be debated in the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his hon. Friends believe that the appointment of two Cabinet Ministers responsible for unemployment emphasises in a positive and dramatic way the emphasis that the Government place on that problem?

Mr. Biffen: Absolutely.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the changes in business allow time for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come to the House to make a statement on the progress of negotiations on steel production quotas in the Steel Council of the European Community? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at the beginning of the recess the Government announced major proposals, including the closure of the Gartcosh works, with its consequences for Ravenscraig and flat products generaly in this country? Are not those decisions being taken without the necessary information being given to the House? Will he ensure that an early statement on that matter is made?

Mr. Biffen: I realise the importance of the subject generally, and specifically in relation to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I shall certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Inner City Disorders

4.3 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the recent disorders. During the past six weeks there have been three serious riots — in the Lozells road area of Birmingham, in Brixton, and Tottenham. Four people have died, one a police constable who was savagely killed. There have also been disorders in Liverpool, Leicester and Peckham in south London. Many police officers and others were injured. There were appalling attacks on the police with petrol bombs and other missiles, and especially in Birmingham and Brixton there was extensive looting of and attacks on shops and cars.

All responsible members of our society will condemn the disgraceful criminal behaviour which has occurred and all responsible members of our society will applaud the courage and dedication of the police in doing their job of maintaining and restoring order on the streets and the housing estates of our major cities. Public order is essential for the maintenance of a civilised way of life and for the safety of individual citizens—on that there can be no compromise. So far 700 people have been charged with offences arising from the disorders.

The riot in Brixton was triggered by the tragic shooting of Mrs. Groce, and the riot in Tottenham followed the death of Mrs. Jarrett after a search had been made at her home. These police operations are being investigated by senior officers from other police forces under the supervision of the independent Police Complaints Authority. These arrangements will ensure that they are fully investigated and that any necessary action is taken. In the case of the Lozells road riot, the chief constable of the west midlands is preparing a report which will be published. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary is being associated closely with the preparation of that report.

So far as police operations are concerned, although the other disorders were serious enough, the riot at Tottenham stands out for the problems which it presented to the police. In that riot, a police officer was killed, firearms were used and the police had to face a ferocious barrage of petrol bombs and other missiles. The design of housing estates like that at Tottenham poses particular difficulties in such circumstances. The Metropolitan police commissioner is urgently reviewing the tactics of the force on such occasions. There must be no no-go areas in any of our cities.

The riot at Tottenham was the first occasion in Great Britain when the chief officer of police gave authority for plastic baton rounds to be used if necessary, though in fact they were not used. Plastic baton rounds and CS gas were made available to the police in Great Britain for public order use following the riots in 1981. They may be used only in the last resort, where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances be unlikely to succeed if tried, and where the chief officer judges such action necessary because of the risk of loss of life, serious injury or widespread destruction of property. That threshold was reached at Tottenham. The commissioner had my full support in making it clear that such weapons would be deployed if similar circumstances arose in the future.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

Other matters need to be looked at. The defensive equipment introduced in recent years—helmets, shields and protective overalls—proved its worth. Without it there would have been more serious casualties. The Metropolitan police are acquiring more shields and other defensive equipment. We have to consider whether any further equipment is required, and that is being done. There may be lessons to be learnt in relation to police training and deployment. The commissioner is pursuing these matters and I am in close touch with him. I shall ensure that any lessons learnt are disseminated nationally.

This Government have done more to meet the needs of the police than any in recent history. Since 1979 the Metropolitan police have increased in strength by nearly 4,500 officers; and other forces in England and Wales are stronger by a similar number. Including civilians, strength has increased by some 12,000. Even after a welcome intake of recruits, the Metropolitan police still have scope to increase strength by about 300 within its present establishment of 27,165. I support the commissioner in his efforts to make good this shortfall as quickly as possible. The force's reorganisation should, in addition, release 200 officers for operational duties; and I have authorised an increase of nearly 50 in the civil staff ceiling next year for further civilianisation.

Following my predecessor's announcement in July on drugs, I have told the commissioner that I am prepared in principle to agree to an increase of 50 officers in the establishment next year specifically to strengthen his efforts against drug trafficking. Taken together, these steps mean that there will be a substantial strengthening of the Metropolitan police in the months ahead. Beyond that I have set urgent work in hand to assess where there are specific needs for further increases in the Metropolitan police establishment, and I shall consider applications from provincial police authorities on the same basis—namely, that the police should have what they need in the fight against crime.

In recent years, much effort has been put into establishing good liaison and consultation between the police and the community in inner city areas, particularly, for example, in Brixton and Handsworth. These disorders must be—I know that they are—deeply depressing for those community leaders and police officers who have put so much effort into establishing a better understanding. But it would be wrong to assume that these efforts were misplaced. On the contrary, they must be continued and redoubled if the police are to protect and serve the community efficently.

More broadly, the Government will continue their strong commitment to urban regeneration. The urban programme has more than tripled, from £93 million in 1978-79 to £338 million in 1985-86, and there has been substantial expenditure in all the riot areas. The Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission are spending more than £100 million in the partnership areas, and my Department plans to spend some £90 million in 1985-86 through section 11 grants.

We must ensure that the very substantial sums that now go, and will continue to go, to inner city areas are spent to the best advantage and directed to the real needs of the people who live there. The city action teams have been set up to improve the co-ordination and targeting of Government programmes in the partnership areas. We shall do everything to ensure that our objectives in the inner city areas are achieved.

These disorders are shocking events. It is of paramount interest of us all, young and old, people of all ethnic backgrounds, that public order should be maintained. I acknowledge—we all acknowledge—the social problems which exist in these areas, but it is no solution to loot and burn shops which serve the area or to attack the police. Mob violence must be dealt with firmly and effectively and criminal acts punished according to the criminal law. The police should have the support of all of us in striving to maintain order and uphold the law. It is their first priority. It is the Government's also.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment to his high office and I regret, as I am sure he does, that his first duty in that new office is to come to the House on such a wretched occasion.

Five people have died in sad and savage circumstances, and the first duty of the House today is to send sympathy to those who are mourning Mr. Kammalia Moliedina, Mr. Amir Moliedina, Mrs. Cynthia Jarrett, Police Constable Keith Blakelock and Mr. David Hodge. We send our concern and best wishes for a speedy and full recovery to Mrs. Cherry Groce, a tragic victim of these dreadful events, and to all others—police, firemen, ambulancemen and ordinary innocent citizens—who have suffered injury in disturbances which have included arson, looting and the dreadful crime of rape.

Many have undergone serious financial loss, and I must first ask the Home Secretary what action can be taken to speed up the payment of compensation under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 and to expand that Act's scope to take account of loss of income after the riots.

The House will be debating these matters on Wednesday, and I must repeat the anger that is felt on this side at the failure of the Government to provide time, which has meant that the House will have only half a day on each occasion to debate this profound issue and the crisis in southern Africa.

Grave questions arise from these disorders and it is essential that the country receives answers on matters which have caused profound national concern. These relate to the nature of policing during riots, and such questions come from the populations of the affected areas and from the police themselves. What the Home Secretary said today will not allay any of these anxieties. They relate to the relationship between the police and the community, in the inner cities and elsewhere. They include disquiet over the spreading use of firearms by the police, the background to the riots, mass unemployment, especially among teenagers, bad housing, environmental decay and dereliction and racial discrimination.

The Home Secretary boasted today about funds provided under the urban programme, but such sums are only a fraction of the money that has been taken away from these areas in abolished housing subsidy, reduced rate support grant and rate support grant penalties. It is an absurdity that the Home Secretary boasted at Handsworth of the money going to Handsworth when in this financial year alone more money is being taken away from the city of Birmingham in rate support grant penalty than all those sums given over a period of years.

Only two days after the Brixton disorders, in April 1981, Lord Whitelaw, as Home Secretary, announced to the House an inquiry under Lord Scarman to start right away. After the latest riots, however, the Government stubbornly refuse an inquiry. The Police Complaints Authority inquiries do not begin to be a substitute because, as Lord Scarman in his report insisted,

"It is necessary before attempting an answer to the policing problem to understand the social problem."

It is all very well for the Home Secretary to boast of the increase in police resources under the Conservatives, but he said nothing about the terrifying crime wave from which the country is suffering and which the clear-up rate shows the police are increasingly unable to combat.

The social problem referred to by Lord Scarman has broadened and deepened in the four years since his report, and the need for action is that much greater. Lord Scarman warned in his report that

"to ignore the complex political, social and economic factors . . . is . . . to put the nation in peril."

Our fear is that, unless the Governments response is much more far-seeing than has so far been demonstrated, Lord Scarman will have been right in his grim warning that

"disorder will become a disease endemic in our society."

Those are the dimensions of the challenge which we face and which the nation expects us to meet.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for his opening remarks. I share his desire, on the question of compensation, that the 1886 Act should be implemented in such a way as to bring as effective and prompt relief as possible. I am in touch with the receiver of the Metropolitan police, who is responsible in London, and my hon. Friend and I had a meeting with the West Midlands county council, which is responsible in Birmingham.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the use of police arms and I agree that if there are lessons to be learnt from the two incidents that are now being investigated we should not be afraid to learn them. The latest available figures show a reduction in the issue and use of arms by the police. In 1983, firearms were issued to police officers in England and Wales in 3,180 operations, while in 1984 the figure fell to 2,667.

The right hon. Gentleman said that I should have gone beyond quoting the figures in the urban programme, by which I stand, and he referred in particular to the question of penalty under the block grant. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is in his place.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the basic arrangements for block grant distribution redistribute resources substantially in favour of areas, such as the inner cities where needs are high. The inner city authorities—not all of them, but too many of them—are opting to throw some of this potential benefit away by spending at levels which they know will reduce their grant entitlement and impose extra burdens—*[Interruption.]*—on their local police and businesses.

Regarding an inquiry, about which the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have tabled a motion for Wednesday, it is clear that when things go wrong, we must inquire into what went wrong and what can be done to put matters right. That is happening through the criminal investigations by the police, through the investigation, under independent supervision, of complaints against the police, through the review of tactics in London, through the review of manpower, about which I have spoken, and through the review of spending, which I also mentioned, to make sure that it is effective. These are all inquiries or reviews which are going on among those responsible so that they can get on with doing their job effectively.

I do not accept the case for a long judicial inquiry overshadowing the efforts that are now being made to learn the lessons which must be learnt. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, such an inquiry would prejudice the possibility of criminal proceedings in some instances. Apart from that, it would impede the effective follow-up action at which we are aiming.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there is to be a debate on this issue. I ask hon. Members to address their questions to it directly rather than make the speeches that they may make on Wednesday.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I believe he has, as the new Home Secretary, the wholehearted support of all of my right hon. and hon. Friends in his wholesale and unreserved condemnation of the appalling acts of violence, arson and criminal damage that have taken place, which cannot be justified even on the grounds mentioned by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)? Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that the Government will, by the provision of men and equipment, ensure that the police have, and continue to have, all the equipment that they need to deal with any similar incidents in future?

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. and learned Friend has observed, it is a matter of men and equipment. The only test is that of need and that is the only test that we shall apply.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): In view of the Home Secretary's statement that all responsible members of our society will condemn the disgraceful behaviour that has occurred, will he agree that it was especially sad that not everyone in elected positions in local and national politics did so at the time? We must start by uniting in condemning such behaviour. Will he agree also that our prime responsibility as politicians at local or national level is to cure the bitterness and deprivation on which, unfortunately, criminality feeds in our inner cities? In that connection, I shall ask the right hon. Gentleman a couple of questions that arose from my visit to Handsworth last week.

Does he accept that there is much criticism that in the past the action that has been taken through self-help schemes and the urban aid programme has been directed to outside contractors, who use outside employees and take away the profits that could be earned by local people? Does he agree that we should be looking for schemes that are designed to continue employment and business in the inner city areas? Will he undertake to talk to his colleagues in the Departments that are concerned to ensure that that is done in future?

Secondly, is it the right hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the 1886 Act that the insurance cover there provided does not include consequential loss of business and loss of vehicles? People are waiting for answers to these questions.

Mr. Hurd: The extent of the insurance cover provided under the 1886 Act needs looking into. I had a preliminary

[Mr. Hurd]

discussion with the West Midlands county council and the council touched on that issue and a number of others. I should like to consider the matter. Having done so, I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Gentleman's point about local labour is important. It was made to me as well while I was in Handsworth. As we examine the effectiveness of the spending of the moneys that we are putting into inner city areas, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is especially anxious that the spending should be directed towards people and not only physical conditions. The point about local labour falls very much into that category.

Unfortunately, it is true that not all the relevant locally elected representatives have condemned violence. I did not go into that in my statement and we may have to inquire rather more carefully into the issue during the Supply day debate.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): When considering these serious matters, will my right hon. Friend not forget the areas in which there are large ethnic minority communities where the citizens are well behaved and extremely responsible? Will he consult his colleagues to ensure that the necessary financial aid that these areas receive is not cut merely because those who live in them do not cause trouble?

Mr. Hurd: I quite agree. My hon. Friend is on to an important point. The last thing that would be needed would be some sort of blanket assumption that all those who are members of the ethnic minority communities have a part in these troubles.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Home Secretary has been firm from the beginning that there is no need for an inquiry, suggesting that he and his advisers have sufficient information. If that is so, what is the reason for the vast increase in crime since 1979 and the regular rioting in the streets, which was not a feature of life in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s?

Mr. Hurd: I rejected the idea of an over-arching judicial inquiry partly on the ground that there have been a host of inquiries by those who have responsibilities in these matters to ensure that they can carry out their responsibilities more effectively. That process is continuing, and rightly so, as part of the general pattern of our response to the problem that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned, which is that of an increasing rate of reported crime. Many different authorities are in this business. We must build a coalition of partners against crime. I do not see that that will be helped by the Opposition's proposal for an over-arching judicial inquiry.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I agree with my right hon. Friend about the efficacy of the shields and other defensive equipment that is provided to the police, but may I suggest that it might be dangerous to promote a defensive mentality on the part of police commanders, and that the sight of policemen cowering behind their shields under a rain of missiles from hooligans in the street was an offensive and humiliating spectacle? Will he bear in mind that the proper function of the police is to enforce the law and arrest wrongdoers at the time, and that that should be more vigorously pursued?

Mr. Hurd: It is difficult to generalise in advance about the operational decisions that a police commander will have to make. We must leave operational decisions to those who are in charge of operations. However, I agree with my hon. Friend that the spectacle that we witnessed at Tottenham on the Sunday night was intolerable. I believe that the commissioner said so in his statement.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Does the Home Secretary appreciate that my constituents, employed or unemployed, black, Asian or white, have everything to gain from the maintenance of law and order and everything to lose by the rioting that took place recently? That was also the position in 1981. What is in his statement to assure my constituents that the Government are seized of the need to ascertain what has happened so that we can take the necessary steps across all areas of policy to ensure that it does not happen again?

Is the Home Secretary aware that in June there were still about a dozen claims outstanding under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 in respect of the events that took place at Toxteth in 1981? Can my constituents expect a more speedy response in the implementation of that Act than the Toxteth people have experienced?

Can the Home Secretary identify any misuse of spending by the Birmingham city council, which it seems is implied in his statement? What is the council spending money on improperly and what has it taken away from the inner city? If the right hon. Gentleman does not understand what I am saying, will he obtain the relevant figures from the Department of the Environment before Wednesday to ascertain the level of net expenditure in the inner cities, taking into account the cuts in rate support grant over the past two or three years?

Mr. Hurd: I am not making any accusation against Birmingham city council. I am merely saying that all responsible authorities, including Government Departments and local authorities, need to look again at the way in which substantial sums have been spent, to ensure that the moneys help those who are affected. I found in Birmingham that there was a ready acceptance of the need to look again at the way in which money is spent.

The hon. Gentleman is quite right in saying that there has been delay in dealing with compensation claims under the 1886 Act following the Toxteth riots in 1981. I am anxious that on this occasion the proceedings should be more promptly carried through. Of course, the relevant authority — in the hon. Gentleman's case the West Midlands county council—has to check claims to ensure that there is not abuse. The projections that the West Midlands county council gave me last week show that a substantial sum will be paid out in this financial year.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is no doubt in my mind or in the minds of my right hon. and hon. Friends that we have seen our police force behave with considerable restraint and courage? I doubt whether any police force anywhere else in the world would have been able to behave in such a manner. Does he agree that the cause of inner city calm is not helped by certain Left-wing councillors? Neither is it helped by the one or two rotten apples, or inadequately trained policemen, who sometimes harass blacks in parts of Britain in the inner cities. May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to a television programme entitled "Do They Mean Us?", which showed a West Indian being

harassed by police unnecessarily? I ask that my right hon. Friend looks at that particular film clip and considers having it shown at the police college to show others what should not happen.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. The selection and training of police officers is enormously important. Since the Scarman report both aspects have been transformed. The change in the complaints procedure which Parliament made last year is enormously important. We have brought forward to the first stage the independent supervision of investigation. I hope that as that major reform sinks into people's consciousness they will have more confidence in the procedure for investigating complaints. Those are two ways in which we are meeting my hon. Friend's point. I should like to look at the film to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, whereas the people in Toxteth complain about insensitive policemen and a heavy police presence, my constituents in Bootle complain that they do not see sufficient policemen. Surely the Merseyside chief constable has got it wrong if one area complains of too many police and another is under-policed. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that heavy drug pushers have moved from parts of Liverpool to Bootle knowing that, because of the heavy police presence in Toxteth, there are insufficient police to do the job and that they can get away with their activities? Will the right hon. Gentleman review the policing policy with the chief constables in the metropolitan counties and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis? Will he for once accept that insensitive policing in areas where there have been riots, disturbances, violence and looting—we all condemn this—has something to do with the problem? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the Government are to some extent responsible for this because of their policies for urban Britain? If the Government can do nothing about the problem, why do Conservative candidates always fight elections on the issue of law and order?

Mr. Hurd: My experience is that, after events of this type, some people say that too few police were involved and others say of the same incident that too many were present. I do not think that one could generalise or step into the shoes of the chief constables or the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis who have to decide how to deploy the forces that are available to them. We authorise the forces. Merseyside, like London, has had a substantial increase in numbers. I do not think that a Home Secretary or the House can tell chief officers how to deploy their resources town by town.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): If alienation between young blacks, young Asians and the police is part of the trouble, cannot a good deal of the blame be attributed to those local authorities which will not allow police into schools to explain to young people their rights and responsibilities in society? Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to convince those local authorities of the error of their ways?

Mr. Hurd: The vendetta that some Labour London boroughs—aided in the past few weeks by some local branches of the NUT—pursue against the police has been carried to the lengths of preventing schoolchildren under their charge from knowing what a policeman looks like, what he does and why he is on the same side as they are. So long as the main Opposition party tolerates such activities it cannot be taken seriously in these matters.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I am sure that the Home Secretary will recognise that, for Socialists in a democratic society, rioting, burning, looting and murder play no part in our political life, not least because they intensify, as has happened in Brixton, the vortex of unemployment and despair. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that in the inner city riots are becoming the standard response to deprivation and to the consequences of the Government's economic and social policies? We want an open inquiry following on Scarman because there is an inevitable and inescapable link between areas of rioting, catastrophic unemployment, cuts in housing investment, especially on problem housing estates, and the Government's conduct on law and order. Those links—even if they do not justify what has happened—are inescapable. Because we do not want the Government to hide behind secret reports, such as the repressed report on housing expenditure, we ask for a reforming of a Scarman-type inquiry to try to understand the volcanic forces that are increasing the fragility of our social harmony. Will the Home Secretary have the courage of his predecessor, Lord Whitelaw, and set up a public judicial inquiry?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for their stance in public on these matters. Undoubtedly that stance has been helpful on the ground. However, I do not accept the generalisations of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser). I do not accept that the standard response in Lambeth to deprivation is a riot. That does not square with any accurate description of what happened the other day in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The looting, attacks on people and the terrible crimes committed cannot in any way be justified or explained by talking about deprivation. I do not, therefore, accept the hon. Gentleman's generalised explanation. There are many areas of deprivation where there have not been riots. There are many areas with large concentrations of ethnic minorities where there have not been riots. That type of generalised explanation simply will not do.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I thank my right hon. Friend for his welcome statement. Is he satisfied that the massive support which we have already given in the past five years to the police force is being used most effectively? Is more money really the answer?

Mr. Hurd: When we assess the need for additional resources for the police we must at the same time assess whether they are making efficient and effective use of the resources that they already have. During the past year or so a great deal of progress has been made in that direction by all police forces in England and Wales. I am anxious that that progress should be maintained.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): While no Socialist or Marxist would condone the rioting or deaths in recent weeks, is it not a fact that massive youth unemployment, deteriorating housing conditions, falling living standards and the racist attitudes of many police officers are the political petrol that the Government have

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

poured on Brixton, Toxteth, Tottenham and many other areas in recent years? That is the real reason why the youth of Britain are exploding in anger.

Mr. Hurd: I reject that analysis. It is interesting that, when I was in Birmingham the day after the riots, that type of verbose analysis was rejected by almost everyone in Birmingham. People said, "You will hear a lot of that blather, but don't take any notice of it."

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend condemn absolutely any person who suggests that the standard reaction to anything is a riot? That suggestion is not only wrong, but condones and encourages that action. This must be stopped. Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that any attack on the police, whether physical or verbal, must be condemned? The police need all the support that we can give them. Will my right hon. Friend recognise that the vast majority of the people expect the precepts of Anglo-Saxon behaviour and of law and order to be maintained? These standards must be maintained, despite what other ethnic minorities want. *[Interruption.]* That needs to be said, and it is not racist to say so.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the first two points. On the third point, I think that the position is clear. People who have legally settled here and made their homes here are entitled to the full protection of the law, including the law against any form of discrimination on grounds of colour. In return, it is right and reasonable to expect not only that they and those whom they influence obey the law but that they co-operate with the institutions that are designed to protect them, including the police.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): In the face of these grave criminal challenges to effective policing in our desolate urban areas, will the Home Secretary take steps to extend and improve the quality of initial and in-service police training? Does the right hon. Gentleman recollect that, following the 1981 riots, it was recommended that the initial training period should be doubled? The Government have not acted on that proposal. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise the importance of this aspect, especially if there is to be any question in the future of using plastic bullets or CS gas? What steps can the right hon. Gentleman take in consultation with the chief constables and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to improve the ethnic balance of the police?

Mr. Hurd: The period of initial training has been substantially increased, and it is not too much to say that its content has been transformed since the Scarman report, partly because of Lord Scarman's recommendations. If the hon. Gentleman goes, as perhaps he already has done, to Hendon or any of the other main training centres, he will see that training in action, and he will see members of the ethnic minorities talking to young police officers. A major effort is being made in the direction that he mentioned. There has been some progress in increasing the numbers of black and Asian police officers, but it is tiny compared to the need. Police forces understand the need and will do that they can to recruit without lowering the standards on which they rightly insist.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members consider the remarks made by Opposition Members about riots being the stock reply now to inner city deprivation as insulting to many inner city areas that face what could be described as deprivation and that contain many ethnic minority groups but whose law and order record is excellent? Does he also acknowledge that the antidote to fire is water? Will he, therefore, confirm that one of the items of equipment that his Department will be considering introducing to police forces is water cannon, which can have the effect — no matter how difficult deployment may be on some occasions — of not just damping down tempers but damping down fires?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. As to his second point, yes, we are considering water cannon. There is a debate within the police forces about them. On the whole, I believe that the debate is rather turning against water cannon, partly because they are difficult to manoeuvre and partly because I do not believe that many people supposed that water cannon would have been much use in the conditions prevailing at Tottenham on that Sunday night. We must conclude the debate and reach a decision.

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Minister not rely on water cannon, plastic bullets, tear gas, flat-nosed bullets and flails to solve the problems to which he has referred, and instead remove the obstacles that he has placed in the way of the local police in Hackney, Tottenham and such places meeting the borough council police committees to achieve the kind of co-operation that he wants? The fact that he has objected to police having any meetings with publicly elected representatives helps cause the problems that he says he is worried about.

Mr. Hurd: That is obfuscation. The London borough police committees do not have, and have not been given by Parliament, a role in this matter. I object strongly to the implication that they are entitled to obstruct police efforts to reach a friendly understanding and a better level of agreement with the people who live in those areas. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, with whom I have discussed these matters in earlier years, should continue to take such a hostile line.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is strong evidence that the best way to direct the public funds that he mentioned to help inner city deprivation is through a Government-sponsored development agency, not least because such an organisation can attract a great deal of private sector funds? I am not raising a theoretical matter. There is ample evidence to show that Glasgow is miles better, thanks to Government policies, than cities such as Liverpool and Birmingham which, despite the funds that they have had, have not made the same good use of them.

Mr. Hurd: I am interested in my hon. Friend's point, born of his experience, but it would be rash of me to be tempted down that road this afternoon.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Is the Home Secretary aware of the growing anger and anxiety felt among our Asian communities about another type of inner city disturbance, which was not mentioned in his statement but which should have been—the growing amount of racial harassment and the number of attacks on Asian

families in the streets and in their homes, especially in north-east London and perhaps in some of the areas that he has mentioned? Is he aware that there was a spate of such attacks in my constituency this summer? It is a miracle that no one has been killed through having petrol poured through the letter box and set alight at one o'clock in the morning. If we go on in that way, we shall shortly have mass murder on our hands. Will he give the House an assurance that strong action will be taken to protect Asian families in the street and in their homes from the evil racists in our midsts?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Sir. I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. He is justified in using such language to draw the attention of the House to that matter. It is one of the subjects that has grown strongly in importance during the time that I was in Northern Ireland. It has been drawn vividly to my attention since I returned. I have discussed the matter with my advisory committee on race relations and with the police. He will be aware that the Association of Chief Police Officers is issuing some strong and effective guidelines. We must ensure that those guidelines are reflected in action on the spot. With the help of people such as the hon. Gentleman, I believe that we can do that.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I represent part of the city of Leicester which has one of the largest ethnic communities in the country. The people of Leicester do not want more money put into the urban aid programme. They want many more police, the certainty that once detected accused people will be prosecuted successfully, stiffer sentences and more people imprisoned. That will bring about the peace that the people of Leicester want and expect.

Mr. Hurd: I note what my hon. Friend said about the police force in Leicestershire. He would not expect me to comment on sentences imposed by the courts. It is the job of this House to provide the courts with what we believe to be adequate and effective maximum sentences. We still have some ground to make up in that respect.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is the Home Secretary aware that those of us who represent inner cities very much share his feelings? We deeply deplore recent events. I beg him to listen to the comments that black and Asian residents often make to us when they criticise police methods of searching property, when front doors are kicked in and property is destroyed. That is what causes such bitterness within black and Asian communities. They do not object to the police searching. Unfortunately, it is the method of searching that the police so often use that causes such bitterness. I beg him to consider that.

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right to say that we in the Home Office should spend a great deal of time listening to authentic points of view on those matters. I am aware of the worry about police methods that he has mentioned. It is difficult to pin down, as he is aware. I hope that his constituents and others will take sensible advantage of the new complaints procedures that Parliament has approved. They will provide a way of sorting out what is nonsense from what is true and I hope that they will gradually gain public confidence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): When my right hon. Friend talks to senior police officers, will he make just two points? The first is that the House expects the police, when they are carrying out their search and arrest policy, to exercise every possible restraint and to show due regard for the rights of the community in which they are moving. Secondly, will he also make the point that, notwithstanding the fact of the riots, the House and the community as a whole expect a policy of vigorous policing to be continued and, where necessary, a vigorous search and arrest policy to be used to apprehend drug pushers and those other people responsible for serious criminal offences?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the general thought behind my hon. Friend's remarks and the phrasing of them.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Home Secretary accept that his statement points to much greater suppressive action by the police and a serious lack of understanding of the problems that lie behind the riots? Will he tell the House whether, further to his statement, the issuing of water cannon and plastic bullets is now standard practice for the police force and Home Office policy? Secondly, have any police officers been suspended following the events surrounding the death of Mrs. Cynthia Jarrett in Tottenham, and what inquiries have been made about that? Thirdly, is he prepared now to visit Tottenham seriously to examine that area's social problems, the background surrounding Mrs. Jarrett's death and other matters that led to the tragic events two weeks ago?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend the Minister of State has visited Tottenham and discussed these matters insofar as they lie within the responsibility of the Home Office. That responsibility does not go as wide as the hon. Member's question. There is an investigation into how the tragic death of Mrs. Jarrett occurred and, as I have already said several times, that investigation is under the immediate and independent supervision of the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I welcome the firm tone of today's statement and its commitment to increased police training and resources, but will my right hon. Friend take care to include in those improvements the special constabulary, which can be such a useful bridge builder between the police and the communities they serve?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I agree. Recent figures that I have seen are reasonably encouraging, but I agree that the special constabulary has an important role to play.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Will the Secretary of State accept that while none of us wishes to give any kind of sympathy to a practice in some quarters of police bashing, at the same time just strengthening the police force and altering tactics will not resolve the problems that have to be dealt with? It would be asking the police to do things they cannot possibly do to solve the problems of these areas. The Secretary of State will not accept a further inquiry. Will he then please re-read the many reports which have been published since the '70s and possibly earlier? There have been inner city studies, the Scarman report, the Select Committee reports and many others, and they have not been acted upon by Government. Will he please re-read them and get action to bring about proper integration of Government policy? Will he get more resources into these areas and see what can be done to

[Mr. Reg Freeson]

reorganise methods of local government to tackle inner city renewal on the scale that is required if we are to avoid any further developments down this path of riot?

Mr. Hurd: The day after the Handsworth riot I re-read the Scarman report, which I read at the time it was published, and I commissioned a study about how far it had been implemented. The policing side is the particular responsibility of my Department. In many cases, the police forces and the Home Office have carried through the spirit and in many cases the letter of what Lord Scarman recommended.

The vaguer, non-policing sections of this report, which are also important, are the responsibility of my other colleagues, but there again I would argue, as I have today, that the rapid expansion of the urban programme and the efforts which have been made in the employment field are within our responses to the spirit of Lord Scarman's report. Certainly, let us take down these reports, look at them again and consider them in the light of modern circumstances and update our policies. That is the line which my colleagues and I are taking.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Will my right hon. Friend continue to emphasise that, while it is imperative that we do not fail to provide the Government resources necessary for the sustaining of peaceful and decent conditions in our cities, it is also our duty to ensure the best value for money from the substantial additional resources the Government have already committed for this purpose?

Mr. Hurd: I quite agree with my hon. Friend. We have to make sure that throughout the public sector the taxpayer is getting value for money and that applies to the police. They are a priority in our minds. They were a priority before and that continues to be so. We have to assess on an up-to-date basis after the riots the nature of police needs and that has to be looked at alongside the effectiveness in use of the resources they already have.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Does the Home Secretary recall that when he was in Handsworth he rejected an inquiry into the events there for the reason —I think I quote him properly—that the ground had been well ploughed by Lord Scarman? Can he please tell the House whether a majority or a minority of the recommendations of Lord Scarman have been implemented by the Government?

Mr. Hurd: I devoted a lot of my answers to the last question but one on that point, but I am perfectly willing to elaborate on it on Wednesday. When I looked into the specific questions raised by the hon. Member I was quite surprised by the extent of implementation.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations, first, on his assumption of office and, secondly, on his obvious determination to enforce the rule of law which must be a precondition for progress in this matter? After investigation, will my right hon. Friend be bringing forward the overall proposals of the Government for dealing with this situation? If he is, will he bear in mind there is serious educational under-achievement in the sector of West Indians living in those areas and that, of course, is the tinder from which violent protest is generated?

Mr. Hurd: I see the connection my hon. Friend is making and I endorse it, but I would get into difficulty if I started to trespass in the province of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Home Secretary aware that his comments about recruitment to the police from the ethnic minorities will appear rather complacent? Does he accept that there is a lack of confidence between substantial numbers of people in the ethnic minorities and the police? Will he accept that the recruitment of more people from the ethnic communities to the police would considerably help confidence, and will he take determined action to increase recruitment from the ethnic minorities?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. I am glad to correct the impression which I gave the hon. Member. I am not in the least complacent about this: I am simply using the figures to show that there has been an increase, but it is not nearly strong enough. I hope we will have the support of the hon. Member and people like him in Bradford in bringing about this increase, which is in the interests of everybody.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Is it not wholly hypocritical of the Opposition to pose as the defenders of law and order when they continue to give support to Labour-controlled police committees throughout the country who bash and criticise the police at every conceivable opportunity?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree. Opposition right hon. and hon. Members will have to sort this out if they are to be listened to with any kind of respect or understanding on these matters. There are far too many police authorities and committees in London who have no responsibility whatever for policing under the law, and those bodies are doing their best to complicate and frustrate the work of the police.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I, of course, deplore the riots, the deaths and the injuries, but is not the Home Secretary's earlier description of the riots as being due to greed and criminality a cover-up for the principal causes, poor police community relations and what Lord Scarman called the tinder box of urban deprivation? Is not the real answer to the first to have proper police accountability to the local community, community policing, and to the second for the Government to reverse their disastrous policies of cuts, housing decline and unemployment?

Mr. Hurd: No. I disagree with every syllable that the hon. Member has uttered.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Whatever may be our response to recent events, can my right hon. Friend assure the House that we will not be seen in any way to reward riot, arson and murder with additional attention or resources lavished on just that sort of area, because that would surely lead to greater trouble in future?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has brought out a good point and it is one which is in the minds of my colleagues and myself.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the Home Secretary agree that the widespread police view that they should distance themselves from a legitimate role in the development of public policy is one of the reasons why they are sometimes seen as an alien group? Would he recommend chief constables to involve themselves in

ideas about housing and particularly planning that are designed to develop a secure and stable community? That is the only way in which we can develop self policing and enable local communities to develop their own secure relationships rather than having to rely on an outside force coming in to pick up the mistakes that have gone before.

Mr. Hurd: The first job of the police is to uphold the law and maintain the Queen's peace. Those are their twin priorities. It may well be that chief officers or chief superintendents in carrying out those responsibilities find themselves, quite sensibly, drawn into other activities of the kind the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. That must be a matter for local judgment. Such activities underpin but are not a replacement for the two jobs I have mentioned.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I am sure my right hon. Friend will be the first to agree that the vast majority of ordinary, decent citizens, black and white, will support entirely what he has said about giving resources to the police. Will he not agree as well that it would certainly help to clear the air and help to reassure communities of all ethnic origins if investigations into police complaints were dealt with thoroughly and speedily.

Mr. Hurd: I quite agree with my hon. Friend and direct his attention to the new PCA, the Police Complaints Authority, under the former Ombudsman, Sir Cecil Clothier. Mr. Roland Moyle, who is known to Opposition Members, is the deputy chairman. The brisk way in which they are setting about their new job is encouraging.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on announcing the setting up of the special units to co-ordinate various Government agencies and assistance in urban renewal. He declined to be drawn on the subject by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), but will he confirm that the agencies will have within their remit not only the co-ordination of assistance, but the targeting of that assistance and whether any further statutory powers will be necessary to ensure that Government aid is more effective?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend and *The Times* today are galloping well ahead of events. I have set up no new units; it is not within my competence to do so. I have said that I am sure that we must bend our minds to whether the resources that we are devoting to the inner cities are well targeted. That certainly includes the question of the machinery.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Can my right hon. Friend tell us approximately when the newly announced offence of disorderly conduct will become law? Does he agree that it will have a valuable effect in controlling the sort of wickedness that we have seen?

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that if the Labour party were genuine and serious in wishing to do something to help law and order Labour Members would press their crazy colleagues at the GLC to withdraw the viciously anti-police video that they have been pushing in schools and everywhere else?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right on that last point. It is a clear illustration of one of the themes that I have been making.

On my hon. Friend's first point, I cannot prejudge the decisions of the House or of another place. The proposal for an offence of disorderly conduct will be included in the public order Bill about which, I dare say, we shall hear more fairly soon. However, it is not connected with riot control or the serious disorders that we have been discussing today. We see the offence, as discussed in the White Paper on public order, as essentially a necessary weapon against hooliganism and minor kinds of violence which, although minor, seriously offend, distress and alarm our fellow citizens, particularly, perhaps, old people living alone.

Board and Lodging Payments

5.3 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about supplementary benefit board and lodging payments.

In April the Government took action to control rapidly increasing expenditure and to help curb abuse. Between December 1982 and December 1984 spending rose from £166 million a year to £380 million a year. At the same time, the number of boarders under 26 had more than trebled from 23,000 to around 85,000.

Regulations were introduced which provided for the maximum weekly amounts for board and lodging to be determined by Ministers, rather than by local offices. In addition, the regulations limited the period during which certain unemployed people under 26 could be paid as boarders. There was a wide range of exemptions to protect the most vulnerable who needed to be boarders, such as families with children. The regulations were scrutinised by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and debated and passed by both Houses of Parliament.

On 31 July, after Parliament had risen, the High Court decided an application for judicial review on the regulations. Mr. Justice Mann rejected the argument that we had failed properly to consult the Social Security Advisory Committee, and he also rejected the argument that the time limit of four weeks applied in this case was unreasonable. The judge did, however, find that the powers in the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 were insufficient to make regulations enabling Ministers to determine board and lodging areas and limits. In other words, the judge's view was that the regulations would have been in order if they had themselves contained the board and lodging areas and limits. Mr. Justice Mann declined to make a formal order, on our undertaking not to apply the time limits pending the making of new regulations or the outcome of any appeal. Immediate action was taken to put this undertaking into effect and I should like to pay tribute to the efforts of our local office staff in carrying out this work.

We have lodged an appeal against the judgment and arrangements have been made for an early hearing in the Court of Appeal. This will take place at the end of November. However, as Mr. Justice Mann specifically recognised, there is a need for a sensible interim operation. It is in the general interest that there should be stability during which the outcome of the appeal can be given proper consideration and the review, which we are committed to carrying out, completed.

I have accordingly laid draft regulations today. They include temporary provisions—which will expire at the end of April 1986—to meet the judge's points. There are two important differences from the regulations passed by the House in April. First, time limits will not apply to existing boarders on benefit. They will apply only to new claimants.

The second important difference is that I am also taking powers, in addition to the exemptions in the previous regulations, to exempt from the time limits claimants who would otherwise suffer exceptional hardship.

The House will appreciate, in view of what I have said, the need to clarify the position. The regulations achieve this without in any way prejudicing the outcome of the appeal. The House will have the opportunity to discuss the new regulations when they are debated next week.

We hope in this way to restrain spending, tackle abuse, but at the same time protect the interests of genuine claimants.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that in the past three months he has twice been found by the courts to have acted illegally in cutting board and lodging payments? On the issue of obedience to the law, about which the Government talk so much, the right hon. Gentleman has been found to have laid illegal regulations which have led to the deaths of at least three young people and have caused public outrage because of the untold hardship and distress inflicted unnecessarily and wrongly, as it turns out, on thousands of others.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, following the two legal decisions, only one of which he referred to today, the board and lodging regulations are in a shambles? After the second case on 18 September, Mr. John Laws, the Treasury counsel, conceded that the previous High Court hearing had effectively quashed the cash limits as well as the time limits in the regulations. How can the Secretary of State claim today that he is regularising the position when his new draft regulations affect only the time limits and do not touch the illegality of cash limits, especially given that it was on that latter point that the social security appeal tribunal found against the Department on 18 September?

More significantly, is the Secretary of State aware that my initial legal advice is that there may be grounds for holding that the new draft regulations are also illegal, because, contrary to the Minister's statement, they still do not address a main reason why Mr. Justice Mann ruled in the High Court on 4 August that the original regulations were illegal? Mr. Justice Mann said:

"Those questions"—

he was referring the grounds on which regulations 2(1)(*a*) applies—

"are questions in regard to individual cases and are not questions as to the entitlement to benefit of a class of claimant which are answerable in terms of rules of general application."

In other words, the judge concluded that the regulations were illegal, not simply because, as the Minister said, they did not contain the board and lodging areas and limits, but because they were applied to classes of individuals, and the Secretary of State had no power to do that. Is the Secretary of State aware that, on that basis, we shall be taking legal advice before next week's debate about whether the new draft regulations may also be ruled to be illegal and invalid?

As the new regulations are clearly still shot through with legal flaws as well as—more importantly—being morally and socially indefensible, will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the only honourable course for the Government is to withdraw the regulations in full and to replace them by the alternative remedies recommended by the Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee? How many times must the Government be told that the reason why total board and lodging payments have grown so sharply in years is no fault of individual claimants, but is almost entirely due to the huge increase in unemployment, especially youth unemployment, and the almost complete collapse of the housebuilding programme, especially flats for single people to rent?

Will the Minister accept that the new, revised regulations are still not in any way addressed to the root causes of the problem, but simply twist the knife in those who have already been victimised? Will he therefore take the only proper and honourable course available to him and suspend these cruel and unreasonable regulations straightaway?

Mr. Fowler: I will not, and I am sorry that the long lay-off has not made the hon. Gentleman's judgment any better than it was before. The Cotton case resulted from the regulations which were passed by both Houses of Parliament and were scrutinised by the Joint Committee. Three issues were raised—consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee, the unreasonable time limit and the fact that my own powers are not of a general nature so that I could lay down time limits and board and lodging areas. It was only in the last case that Mr. Justice Mann found for Mr. Cotton. That position is covered by the new regulations which specify the areas and the limits.

I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about what he terms his initial legal advice. We will obviously want to study what that initial legal advice amounts to. However, there is absolutely no question of our wanting or seeking to withdraw these regulations for the very good reason that the position before we acted was quite insupportable. Payments had increased out of all proportion. When the hon. Gentleman says that the number of boarders, for example, under 26 had trebled, that is far more than can be explained by housing problems or unemployment. We had a situation where the maximum amounts payable were determined by local offices, charges were being pushed up, and there was fraud and abuse. In other words, there was a case for action, and the Government have taken it. We shall seek to protect the interests of claimants, but the hon. Gentleman's basic case is insupportable.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): As the regulations also cover payments for people in residential homes, does my right hon. Friend agree that part of the problem relating to abuse arises from overcharging, very often for extremely substandard services and accommodation for elderly people? Does he agree also that the answer is not a standard payment, which can disadvantage genuine charities which are struggling to provide a good service but are unable to do so within the standards laid down, but rather a form of investigation or inquiry into the different homes and laying down perhaps what each home should be able to charge for the service that it provides?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. I have a great deal of sympathy with that point, and that is the position to which I should like to move, but my hon. Friend, whose knowledge of these matters is substantial, will understand that it is not possible to move to that in one step. Nevertheless, there is a great deal in what he says and it is part of the review that we are conducting. I am sure my hon. Friend will also agree that one of the permanent parts of these regulations is the new increased financial limits. They will apply to residential homes and to nursing homes, and they will, I think, be welcomed by the voluntary bodies.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity that the court case now gives him to reconsider the whole question of time limits, particularly as before the reshuffle one Department told people to get on their bikes, and his Department then told them that they could not stay where they had arrived, thus showing some inconsistency in Government policy?

In the new draft regulations the right hon. Gentleman took on board one of the points made by my colleague the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) about extending the regulations to youngsters on bail. Will he tell us whether exceptional hardship cases will cover young people who find either a job or a home, but cannot take up either until after the time limit, so that they can be counted as being in exceptional hardship for the continuing period, which may well exceed the time limit which the regulations would otherwise lay down?

Mr. Fowler: I considered the last point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but the purpose of having an exceptional hardship clause is to give even more discretion to the exemption classes which already exist, and that is the spirit in which they have been introduced. However, I shall give further consideration to that.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, the time limits are currently suspended. Under the new regulations, the time limits will remain suspended for existing boarders. The difference is that new boarders — those who become boarders after the regulations come into force, if passed by Parliament on 4 November — will be subject to time limits unless they are exempt. Financial limits have never been suspended, and of course they continue to apply.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the reason why he brought in the regulations is that there was ample evidence of abuse? If the regulations are technically defective, surely the answer is not to withdraw them, as the Opposition suggest, but to bring them into line with legal requirements, which is exactly what he is proposing.

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I think that that is the position. There is, as we all know, evidence of abuse——

Mr. Meacher: By landlords.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman speaks of abuse by landlords, and that, of course, is correct. We all know of the advertisements that have been placed. However, I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that there is clear evidence of abuse by claimants as well. I shall give one example. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman will listen, he may learn something. A special fraud investigation earlier this year in Euston showed that about half of those claiming to be resident at particular hotels were no longer there —about 600 cases out of 1,200. As a result, we have asked for other checks to be carried out in all regions. So the hon. Gentleman's immediate and superficial response, that claimants are not abusing the system, is shown, I fear, to be totally wrong.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Secretary of State give very careful consideration to the way in which he is attempting to railroad these regulations through the House this week and next? He prayed in aid the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments to suggest that he got them right last time round. He is now placing on that Committee an extremely heavy burden in carrying out its duty to scrutinise the regulations properly. As the Committee meets tomorrow, it will be very difficult for it to consider all the points put to it as a result of the right hon. Gentleman laying the regulations today, and if the Committee waits until next Tuesday it will be difficult to

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

produce an accurate report to enable the House to have an informed debate. Will the Secretary of State therefore consider delaying the introduction of the regulations until the House returns in the new Session?

Mr. Fowler: There is no question of my seeking to railroad this through. The Court of Appeal will be looking at the position since April. There is nothing in any action that I am proposing that will affect that, or any rights that might result from that, but it is clearly in everyone's interest to have as much certainty in the matter as possible, and the new regulations are designed to take us through the period of appeal. That avoids the prospect of confusion. It allows the Government, Parliament and the public to consider the next step, and it also avoids what could be the absurd position of going back to the situation prior to April 1985, which would mean a reduction in some of the limits — for example, in the nursing and residential homes referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi).

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Whilst appreciating that the matter is to be settled by appeal in November, and also appreciating the extent of the abuse, may I ask my right hon. Friend to bear in mind the totally unsatisfactory background to this problem, which is that mobility will never give a young man of 26 or under the opportunity to be in a place long enough to secure a job? This is a very real problem which my constituents face.

Mr. Fowler: That is certainly not the intention of the regulations. We have to strike a balance between allowing young people the opportunity to find a job—something which we aim to do, and will obviously encourage them to do—and avoiding a situation where, as has been shown, some have turned to a permanent way of life in which, if they find a job, they will not be able to sustain the standard of living which they have been enjoying.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Was not the Prime Minister most unwise, and characteristically inflexible, to say within days of the court decision that the regulations would be reintroduced? Are they not a source of great fear for the young homeless, and are they not detested by all the organisations that seek to help them? Are they not a recipe for more homelessness, vagrancy and crime among young people?

Mr. Fowler: For the second time this afternoon, the hon. Gentleman is exaggerating the position. It is absurd to believe that there is no problem or that things could be kept as they were, because that is clearly not the case. I think that that is recognised, perhaps even on both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman claims that hardship has been caused. The early results of our monitoring do not show evidence of general hardship being caused by the policy. The survey in southern England showed that a quarter of claimants were covered by exemptions and that over one third, approximately, continued to live in the same accommodation. Therefore, it is not anything like the picture that the hon. Gentleman is painting.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend knows that many of us will support the general thrust of the new regulations, but when examining the detail, not only the time limits but the geographical definition of areas should be looked at. I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree that one can hardly regard the north-east coast of England as a seaside resort in its historical context, so the four-week limit will have to be changed. Will my right hon. Friend also examine cases of people being disadvantaged when they have to leave the homes where they have been raised because of the brutality and ignorance of their parents? They will be forced to move away from all their friends, relations, churches, clubs and everything else as a result of what is liable to happen under the regulations.

Mr. Fowler: The final point raised by my hon. Friend might be dealt with under the existing exemption policy, but if it is not, that is the point of adding to the exemptions a provision whereby such exceptional hardship can be dealt with.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Secretary of State explain how he can argue, as he did this afternoon, that he is trying to represent and "protect"—to use his word—the interests of claimants when the only reason why he is here making a statement is that it is the courts that are representing the interests of claimants against his intentions?

Mr. Fowler: That is not the position. Mr. Justice Mann envisaged the possibility of amending regulations, and he framed his judgment accordingly. It is in no one's interest that there should be uncertainty over the next months. The new regulations that I am proposing will expire after six months. That is the period in which the Court of Appeal will decide, and the parties can decide on further action. The regulations will not affect those living in board and lodging accommodation at the time they come into force.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Bearing in mind the extra work that the regulations have generated, will my right hon. Friend pay special tribute to the officers in Department of Health and Social Security offices around the country who, at least in my constituency, have handled the extra work with professionalism and good grace? Will my right hon. Friend explain who will have the right of judgment in cases of exceptional hardship?

Mr. Fowler: I shall have the residual discretion on exceptional hardship. I should like to underline what my hon. Friend said about the staff. The staff in the DHSS have worked magnificently to deal with the situation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): How much will this reversal in the courts cost the Government? Where will the money come from within the right hon. Gentleman's budget? What is happening in DHSS offices? Is it true that in many offices staff are working day and night to clear the backlog of cases that have come forward?

Mr. Fowler: I have no evidence of the final point raised by the hon. Gentleman. With regard to what he said at the beginning of his question, I should tell him that the matter is the subject of an appeal. We are appealing to the Court of Appeal, so before the hon. Gentleman tries to count the cost the ultimate decision must be made.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend ignore the shrill and exaggerated barrack room legalisms that we have heard from the Opposition Front Bench and accept congratulations on what is a sensible, interim, tidying-up measure? From now on, will my right hon. Friend concentrate on a point that is worrying many in the communities most affected—the much suspected

incidence of fraud and abuse? My right hon. Friend has said that he has positive proof of such fraud. Will he say a little more about that and what he will do about it in south coast seaside towns, such as my constituency, which have been affected by it?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I said, we have conducted a special fraud investigation in Euston, which showed, by any measure, a totally unsatisfactory position. The result is that I have asked for other checks to be carried out in all the regions. We would be failing totally in our responsibility if we did any less than that. In addition, there is evidence of different charges being made, with DHSS claimants being charged a higher rate than ordinary residents. That all adds up to the fact that it is not enough to say that the existing situation can be preserved, because the position before we took action was totally unsatisfactory.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I should like to be associated with the representations made to my right hon. Friend by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on residential rest homes. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he is doing for cases of exceptional hardship. However, representing as I do a seaside town, I should like to say that we still have a considerable problem which is not entirely solved by my right hon. Friend's statement today.

I was in my local DHSS office in Poole only on Friday, and the staff were not, as was suggested by Opposition Members, inundated with a backlog, but they do have a considerable problem. There are still thousands of claimants in my constituency, many of whom have no intention of seeking work. That is evidenced by what my local DHSS office tells me. It also told me on Friday that there is no doubt that charges by boarding houses in my constituency were put up substantially, to the maximum level. In fact, that became the minimum level. Therefore, we have an acute problem, and I urge my right hon. Friend to deal with it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Fowler: I hear what my hon. Friend says, that a balance must be held, but the evidence that the Department and I are receiving is that some of the major problems, particularly in some of the seaside resorts, have become considerably easier over the past month. However, I shall look further at the point raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Meacher: May I ask three questions arising from earlier questions? How will the Secretary of State seriously exercise the discretionary exemption himself? Did I hear him say that he would reserve that power to himself? How will that operate in any widespread way? Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman really believe that two, four or even eight weeks is enough time for a young person to get a job, when no fewer than a quarter of young people leaving school are unemployed? Thirdly, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how many young people have been forced out of their bed and breakfast accommodation, or board and lodgings, since 29 April as a result of the regulations?

Mr. Fowler: On the last point, we have only the early results of our own monitoring at present, but I shall try to make the evidence that we have available to the House before the order is debated next week. For example, as I have said, our monitoring in southern England showed that one quarter of claimants were covered by exemptions, and that more than one third continued to live in the same accommodation. It has also shown that no general hardship is being caused by the policy.

The time limits, again, are a matter of judgment. We have debated this time and again and my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security has gone over this on countless occasions. I believe that reasonable time is allowed for people to look for jobs in a particular area.

On the question of discretion, the exemption policy already covers a wide range of situations, and probably about one quarter of all cases are covered by the existing exemption policy. In addition, I shall now have discretion to exempt cases of exceptional hardship. Clearly, such exemption will be exercised through the DHSS, and particularly through the headquarters division of the DHSS.

Steel Industry

5.30 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"British Steel's intention to close the Gartcosh plant and the implications for the future of the steel industry."

At this moment, a number of my colleagues — including my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) — are meeting the TUC steel committee to discuss the decision, announced by British Steel during the parliamentary recess, to close the Gartcosh plant in my constituency by 31 March next year. That decision came as a great blow to my constituents and caused great concern to many people in Scotland. British Steel says that just over 700 jobs will be lost, but we know that, because of the knock-on effects, we are thinking in terms of more than 1,000 jobs in a very hard-pressed area, which is looking for new jobs rather than wishing to experience the loss of any of the jobs that we now have.

In addition, there is extremely grave concern about the Ravenscraig complex of which Gartcosh is very much a part. Gartcosh is the cold finishing mill for Ravenscraig and clearly its biggest customer. If Gartcosh is removed and there is not the reasonable investment in Ravenscraig that Scottish people rightly demand, there will be great worry across the whole political spectrum in Scotland about the future of this very important plant, the closure of which would be devastating for the industrial future of west central Scotland.

On 2 July the Prime Minister told us that the House would be made aware of British Steel's plans for these matters, but, although the announcement was made in the recess and is now being implemented, the House has had no discussion whatever on this major decision by British Steel. It seems to me right that there should be discussion and debate on this and that we should consider the implications, not just for my constituency, important and profound though they are, but for the whole of the British steel industry — in Wales and England as well as in Scotland. I believe that the steel industry and its future is essential to our manufacturing base and I know that this is of the utmost importance in the priorities that the House has set.

In Scotland we are gravely concerned about the unemployment situation that we face. In my constituency, because of the decline of major industries in an area that was once prominent in the mining, steel and iron industries, there have been so many closures that one village after another has faced devastation, and what was once known as the "iron burgh" of Coatbridge has hardly a steel job left. In those circumstances, a debate on the future of the British steel industry is of the utmost importance.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening and I know that the House will give due regard to the case that I have made.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"British Steel's intention to close the Gartcosh plant and the implications for the future of the steel industry."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Member has said. He knows that my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter raised by the hon. Member meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Design and Innovation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

5.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I am delighted that at long last the House has an opportunity to debate the very important industrial issue of the role of design and innovation in the economic wellbeing of our nation.

I am delighted to report that in Washington DC in August this year I was honoured to receive, on behalf of the Government, a unique award from the Congress of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design. In his generous tribute, the congress chairman, Mr. Deane Richardson, said that the award recognised the British Government's

"long term and increasingly active support of design"

and their

"unparalleled commitment to the contribution design can make, not only to industry, but to people the world over".

Putting this award in its context surely sets the scene for today's debate.

The performance of our manufacturing industry is of critical importance to the United Kingdom's future economic strength and, of course, to standards of living. Manufactures account for 68 per cent. of our total exports of goods and services. Manufacturing is exposed much more directly than many service industries to international competition and its competitiveness is therefore critical to the future of the entire economy. Together with capital investment, the exploitation of innovation provides the driving force for maintaining and increasing our share of today's fiercely competitive world markets.

The importance that the Government attach to manufacturing is shown by the wide range of schemes of assistance provided by the Department of Trade and Industry. Direct financial assistance to industry amounted to around £1,500 million in 1984-85 with over 90 per cent. going to manufacturing. My Department's support for the innovation programme supplements the general assistance available for research and development under the Science and Technology Act by a number of specific schemes aimed at encouraging greater awareness of the new technologies, at providing help with consultancy services and training and, where necessary, at giving assistance with research and development investment.

This Government's support for innovation in industry has increased from almost £94 million in 1980-81 to some £240 million in the current year. In 1978-79, the previous Administration were spending less than £40 million on innovation in industry. This was complemented by a variety of sectoral schemes to encourage short-term capital investment in industries such as drop forging and red meat slaughterhouses. The Government have turned their back on short-term sectoral measures and are encouraging innovatory application of a wide range of enabling technologies that cut across the needs of all innovative industries. Our aim is to ensure a lasting contribution to competitiveness. Support for robotics, microelectronics, biotechnology and optical fibres, for example, has continued to grow and has demonstrated its effectiveness in industry.

We are redirecting our innovation support to deal with the major inhibitions to exploitation and use of technology in industry. Companies are now much more profitable than they were during the recession, when they were investing in short and medium-term product developments in order to stay in business. We now want United Kingdom companies to get ahead of the game and so are encouraging, through publicity and consultancy schemes, an awareness of the new technological products. We want to encourage innovatory, collaborative research and development projects to enhance confidence in market prospects for new products. We want to help companies to extend their technical base through collaboration with universities and polytechnics. For example, our teaching company scheme budget will expand from £3 million now to £5·2 million in two years' time. In cash terms, the Department will be increasing its support of these non-project activities by 50 per cent. by 1987-88. In addition, we are stressing the vital importance of adequate supplies of trained manpower through studies such as the information technology skills shortages committee — which I chaired — which has been instrumental in helping the higher education sector respond more rapidly to the changing needs of industry.

Through these schemes, we are encouraging the development and use of key enabling technologies — information technology, fibre optics and robotics, for example — which draw on several scientific disciplines and which have applications across the mature as well as the new industries. The aim is to help companies over the first hurdle in the acquisition and application of new technology, after which companies can be expected to use their own resources.

Sir Terence Beckett said recently that a company that operates in a competitive environment must innovate to keep up with its rivals. In the modern world, a company's intellectual capital—its designs, patents, know-how and knowledge—are more important than its fixed assets in determining its earning power and even its capacity to survive.

Innovation in British companies, therefore, should not be regarded as a one-off event separate from the rest of business. Innovation should be treated as an essential feature of company operation. The problem is deep-seated, and we must work to bring about the necessary change of attitude. There are now encouraging signs that bankers and financial advisers are paying more attention to intellectual capital in their analysis of investment opportunities.

In the main, today's successful trading nations are categorised by their close attention to the rapidly changing demands of the market place and by the quality and design of their products. In fulfilment of this principle, my Department has been running its quality and design campaigns, both of which are aimed at changing management attitudes.

The British Government are very aware that in design, and in the skill of our designers, industry has the ideal mechanism to reforge and reinvigorate our economy. This mechanism needs constant attention. Having held the Government's design portfolio for three and a half years, I have learnt that there must be a long-term commitment to design from Government if our economic recovery is to be sustained on meeting new and growing sectors of market demand.

We have that commitment. We have a policy that includes a new recognition of the importance and desirable status of engineers, designers and technologists. The

[Mr. John Butcher]

Government are committed to maximising the role of all design disciplines in improving our country's economic health and in supporting a higher quality of life.

What is more, we now have the three major building blocks that we need to ensure success. First, we have a design education and training system which is one of the best in the world and recognised as such by our big competitors overseas, many of whom employ British designers in key positions. Secondly, we have the successful industrial firms with established worldwide reputations for excellent design, firms, which can act as standard bearers for the rest of industry. To take the automotive and aerospace industries, for example, we have Jaguar whose XJ12 is, if hon. Members will forgive a little personal prejudice, the finest production sports-saloon car in the world. There is also Hawker Sjddeley whose Harrier jump jet is internationally renowned, and the March 84C racing car designed by March Engineering using the world-famous Cosworth engine. The car won the 1985 Duke of Edinburgh prize for design excellence. There were 14 finishers at last year's Indianapolis 500, all of which were March 84Cs.

Thirdly, we have the professional organisations such as the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, representing 7,000 industrial designers and the representative bodies of engineering designers including the Institution of Engineering Designers. There is also the Design Council, which is the Government's principal agent in design, and which, as the House knows, plays such an important role in promoting the benefits of good design. It is essential that these building blocks are put together in a coherent way if they are to form the foundations upon which success can be built.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister chose to discuss this subject at a seminar on product design and market success at 10 Downing street in January 1982 with a group of 60 industrialists, designers, educationists and Ministers. The holding of that seminar was to prove a crucial turning point in this country's attitude to design.

When I studied the outcome of the seminar, the first point that struck me was the extent to which design influences nearly all aspects of manufacture. It affects the ease and economy of manufacture, ease of maintenance, reliability, choice and use of materials, appearance, presentation, ergonomics, fitness for purpose and corporate identity. The second point was that designers and their supporters are full of innovative ideas. We had some 40 suggestions at the seminar and nearly all turned out to be suitable for Government action. It was my responsibility to see that we got on with the job.

We set out within a few months of the seminar to encourage the enlightened use of design consultancy. With the Design Council acting as our agents, we set up the design advisory service-funded consultancy scheme—now part of the Department of Trade and Industry's business and technical advisory service—which provides small and medium-sized firms with financial assistance to use top-flight designers. So far, I am delighted to report, the scheme has received more than 3,200 requests for assistance and nearly 2,000 projects have been completed. Projects completed during the first year are already demonstrating increased market share, increased profits, increased sales, increased production and, of course, increased jobs.

The scheme was not introduced to give birth to a Harrier jump jet or a Rolls-Royce engine. Its purpose is to encourage management in small and medium-sized firms to recognise the practical, balance sheet benefits of design input, and to realise that good design improves market share, is a good investment and should be a crucial part of their business.

I am delighted with the results so far. Apart from the benefits to a firm's bottom line, consultants are reporting that they have formed long-term relationships with new clients and that they are being used to help companies strengthen their in-house design capabilities. Many managers are reporting a higher level of design activity in their companies. To help publicise all these benefits an exhibition of case studies is touring the country.

Having got the funded consultancy scheme off the ground in 1982 we turned our attention to parallel methods of raising senior management's awareness of design. In early 1983 we mounted a brief but intense advertising campaign, its purpose being mainly to get people talking about good design. We put advertisements in national newspapers and specialist magazines over a period of three weeks. We followed that with a series of seminars all over the country throughout 1983 under the title "Design for Profit". They were aimed at senior managers, particularly chief executives and finance directors. They were attended by nearly 1,500 managers and they led to a doubling of applications for help under the funded consultancy scheme.

In February 1984, we held a design seminar for financial institutions to encourage them to take a firm's product design and development policy into account when making investment decisions. We have recently supported a series of four seminars on design management organised by the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers.

There has been a considerable increase in design coverage by press, radio and television since the campaign began. Many managers are reporting a higher level of design activity in their companies and many designers are reporting a greater demand for their services. This is all very welcome.

Alongside the awareness activities we have also begun to support a wide range of activities in education and training. In the context of education, one of our most important tasks is to encourage the sort of cultural change that is needed to ensure that future generations have an inherent understanding of design and an appreciation of the value of well-designed objects. We also need to develop a national culture that honours manufacturing industry as much as it honours pure research or the established professions such as law and medicine. Let me mention just some of our design education initiatives where we have deliberately chosen to work at every level from infant education to postgraduate and post-experience training.

We have asked the Design Council to study existing practice in all design-related education in primary schools and to prepare a report recommending action that should be taken to ensure that best practice is disseminated right through the primary education system. We are concerned in this initiative with design as part of general education, thus helping the cultural change we wish to bring about. We have also noticed that such education can have a dramatic effect on the performance of students assessed as below standard against conventional academic criteria. Ability in reading, writing, drawing and mathematics

improves considerably when taught in the context of a design-related subject. For example, a project on the pyramids can and should involve all these skills, as well as the historical dimension.

We are giving support over a six-year period to a curriculum development project which is aimed mainly at helping to fill gaps in the vocational design education curriculum at secondary and tertiary level. Other organisations are playing their part. For example, the Business and Technician Education Council, through vigorous leadership from its board for design, is endeavouring to promote quality in design education by concentrating on the range of skills that a designer should have. In particular, BTEC is promoting the need for students to have as part of their design courses relevant work experience so that their education is set in the context of the real commercial world; "hands on" experience of various forms and uses of new technology and the requirement to develop basic skills in business to relate design to costs and competing in the market place.

At the far end of the scale, we are supporting both the work of the design management unit at the London Business School and the implementation of a report by the Council for National Academic Awards on design management education in polytechnics and colleges. Both of these activities fit in with our aim of increasing the awareness among managers of the benefits of good design by ensuring that they then have the skills to absorb the design input into their corporate strategy.

A pilot scheme, entitled "Young Designers into Industry", has just begun. Under the scheme 12 new textile graduates will spend six months to a year in selected companies on a carefully planned and monitored programme of industrial experience. If the pilot is a success, we hope to extend the scheme gradually to other industry sectors involving up to 200 young designers.

Last year I was satisfied that we had got things moving on a number of fronts. A wide variety of useful initiatives had been taken. The time had come to ensure that the initiatives were all pulling towards commonly agreed aims and objectives. I therefore prepared and published a policy document entitled "Design for Design: A framework for Action". I believe that this is unique and that no other Government have put design into their industrial strategy in this way before.

Hon. Members who have seen a copy of that document may also have noted that it bears the stamp of a designer. It is the first Whitehall policy document whose layout was designed by an outside designer. No doubt its clarity speaks for that particular input. In it, I set out the Government's principal objectives in their design policy. They were, first, to continue to increase awarenesss in industry and commerce of the benefits of good design; secondly, to encourage greater consciousness of good design by customers; and, thirdly, to reinforce the importance of design education and training at all levels.

We sought a mechanism that would structure all future design initiatives so that they met these objectives. As a result, a strategy group was established, based in the Design Council, which reported at the end of 1984. Detailed recommendations for action were prepared and were put to Government for decision. At a meeting with the Design Council several months ago, I was able to welcome the report and provide the council with an additional grant of £500,000 to enable it to get further activities started.

We have achieved quite a lot since the Prime Minister's seminar in January 1982. I think it is clear that we could not have done so without wholehearted support from designers and from their representative bodies such as the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, from other bodies such as the Royal Society of Arts and colleges such as the Royal College of Art. And, above all, we have had the firm and staunch support of an experienced design promotion body, the Design Council.

We can be proud of this achievement. We can be proud of our designers. We can be proud of our successful manufacturers, whose design and quality-led attack on international markets is winning back for us some of our lost market share. They are the companies where jobs are secure because they are based not on artificial subsidies but on real profits derived from success. We want more companies to follow this example, and that is what we are working towards.

By the end of this financial year the Government will have trebled the spend on design initiatives since 1982 and helped over 3,000 firms to improve their design capability and therefore their profitability.

This Government have a unique commitment to the sponsorship of design as a major force for industrial innovation, and so over the last four years the Government have increased expenditure on design promotion from £4 million in 1982 to nearly £12 million in 1985-86. I can think of no more cost-effective item of public expenditure on the industrial front.

I welcome — if that is what is happening this afternoon — the politicisation of the design debate, though not in party political terms but as a method of raising the general awareness of the importance of good design as a key factor in improving the competiveness of all sectors of industry and commerce.

Britain's industrial problems are largely due to a mismatch in our economy — that is, an economy which has until recently committed too many of its national human and capital resources to the production of goods for which demand is low or stagnant and not enough of such resources to the production of goods for which demand is high and growing. Our talented designers are the key link between market demands and a company's production facilities. As such, they are a key element — in my view, the key element — in leading our national industrial fight back.

5.59 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): The whole House will agree that today's debate is important. It is the first time in about 20 years that we have debated industrial innovation and design in a linked context. It is unfortunate that today's debate has been so severely contracted by the important preceding private notice question and statements. Nevertheless, in the time that is still available to us certain important points need to be made direct to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who seems to be living in a completely different world from that which is known to me as it concerns manufacturing industry in the west midlands, through the continuing loss of market share and the continuing inadequacy of product and process innovation in British industry.

It does the Minister no good to indulge in orgies of self-congratulation and complacency, because he knows that innovation in design, particularly in manufacturing, has

[Mr. Geoffrey Robinson]

never been worse. A recent report on overseas trade by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry makes it dramatically clear that the crisis facing British industry, particularly in those areas to which the Minister referred as being growth areas, is acute and becoming worse. Under unchanged Government policies it can only become even worse, to the point of being terminal.

The Minister rightly directed most of his remarks to industrial innovation. Before dealing with that I shall refer to the Design Centre and the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, to which the Minister also referred. We welcome the award to the Government and we do not wish to spoil the flourish and obvious personal delight that the Minister took in going to Washington to receive the award.

I shall put to the Minister some questions which have been put to me by various bodies, notably by the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers about its centre for design studies.

Throughout the debate we shall come up against the Government's credibility gap—the gap between what they say and what they do. Unlike President Truman, who advised observers of the political scene in America not to read his speeches but to look at his budgets and spending, this Government plead with us to believe their speeches despite the directly contradictory evidence of their Budgets and spending cuts.

Within the greatly increased design budget, will the Minister support the SIAD initiatives in establishing a centre for design studies? I am sure the Minister is aware of the purposes for which that centre is being established. It aims to bring design more closely in touch with manufacturing industry, to bring the institutions teaching design in closer touch with the manufacturing sector and to bring design studies more closely within the secondary education system. They are laudable aims. Does the Minister intend to commit himself to provide money to support his words?

Can the Minister explain why design, which has been declared a priority in education, has not been allocated a penny piece? I accept that this is not the Minister's direct responsibility, but there is an overlap in which he has a direct interest. Priority for this Government simply means to be spared the chop.

The Government's cuts are having a severely deleterious effect in other areas. One has only to look at the bleak, forbidding appearance of the Tottenham Court road police station and contrast it with the private sector modernisations in the Tottenham Court road shopping area—Habitat, Heal's and Laskys—to realise how far the Government are from setting an example in design.

The economic benefits of good design are becoming increasingly accepted and understood, thanks to the excellent work, despite the hostility displayed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, of the science policy research unit at Sussex university. Social benefits could be exploited by a Government committed to relating in a meaningful, human way to the people whom they represent and with whom, through various offices, they are daily in direct and widespread contact.

In computer parlance, the Government should go for a "friendly approach", but that language and such concepts are foreign to the Government's ideology. The quality of the social environment—the interface in hospital waiting rooms, police stations and jobcentres—could be much improved. The scope is enormous.

Such an achievement requires the Government to practise what they preach. Like any other service, good design needs customers and purchasers. The Government could and should be major purchasers of good design. They could influence and promote good design by an enlightened and benign public sector building programme. The Government cannot adopt such a policy because they are hung up on the perverted logic that Government spending destroys jobs and inhibits initiative. Meanwhile, fully trained architects and designers join the brain drain or the dole queue. About 500,000 construction workers are eager to be back at work.

Design, important and central though it is, and integral as it must be to the manufacturing and process industries, cannot be a substitute for product and process innovation. Britain has a proud history of industrial innovation. We are pioneers of the industrial revolution. Britain is the land that gave birth to the jet engine and radar, to penicillin and cephalosporium. It has made a long and proud contribution to the world's industrial and medical progress.

More recently, publicly funded research through the Medical Research Council discovered the fundamental genetic code of human life, the double helix. Crick and Watson are two outstanding Nobel prize winners. Their work has been continued by Cesar Milstein, who is also a Nobel prize winner and is also working at the MRC laboratory at Cambridge. On his fundamental research into monochromal antibodies will be built not only life saving drugs to cure cancer, and to prevent rejection in transplants, but the industries of the 21st century and the forthcoming biotechnological revolution which will equal, if not surpass, the microelectronic revolution of today in its implications for food production, energy creation and the prolongation of life itself.

The continuation of that proud heritage of outstanding intellectual achievement, derived from unique scientific research and development, is put at risk by the Government's policy. The perversity is hard to believe. The Government, recognising the achievements and even, as today, schizophrenically proclaiming them, are cutting back systematically and destructively year in and year out on Britain's scientific research effort. I say that the Government are perverse because their simpliste argument is that, because we are good at research and not so good at exploiting it, if we cut back on research we shall achieve better development and application. That argument is all wrong. It is a total non sequitur.

Certainly, our basic research has been good. Certainly, we have not exploited it as we should. There is no reason for us to be complacent about our achievements in basic research, but the Government's cuts in research budgets in all the research councils, the cuts in the universities' capacity to promote research and the cuts imposed on the University Grants Committee have not been made good in real terms through product innovation, as the Minister knows.

I shall deal later with the five months moratorium and the disastrous effect that it had when the Minister of State succeeded his predecessor and promptly undid the little good work that had been done previously. To emphasise the importance of the commercial exploitation of research, and indeed, as I would, to go further and accord to it as great an intellectual and cultural distinction as that

traditionally recorded to basic scientific research, does not, and cannot be allowed to, lead to the destruction of the latter. However, that is where the Government's policies are leading us. If the Minister does not believe me or the clear statements made by the Labour party and the TUC, he should listen to the most distinguished scientists charged with the research and development effort throughout the country, who for the last three years have been pleading with the Government for a change of policy.

The president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science threw away a prepared speech and delivered an impassioned plea to the Government to reverse their policies. In its heavy document "Future Business", the TUC pointed out only too clearly that the future was being prejudiced by short term cuts.

Sir John Kingman, chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council, and Sir David Phillips, chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, have pointed out that the Government are hacking away at the scientific base to a point where Britain will no longer rank among the best in the world. They have said that, not only because it is right that Britain should be at the forefront of fundamental scientific research in its own right, not only because we are good at doing that, not only because British fundamental research and science have been the envy of the world, but because they understand that we should not hinder or stand in the way of the application of that research and development but that, on the contrary, without it we should have even less chance of proceeding and developing as an industrial nation.

Those were the very words used by Sir Hans Kornberg, president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, when he threw away his prepared speech at Strathclyde university a month or two ago, and said:

"I am convinced that in the long term we cannot hope to prosper as exploiters of imported ideas, any more than we can hope to prosper as the assemblers of imported parts."

That is the message that the Government must take on board. Our future must lie in exploiting the fruits of basic theoretical research. We cannot do that by cutting research. It is not a question of robbing Peter to pay Paul; it is robbing Peter to starve Paul.

Where have Government policies led us? Has there been any switch from theoretical fundamental research into applied research and development in manufacturing industry? Of course there has not. What has happened to research? The Minister talks about record profits and industry now being able to embark on a process of industrial and product innovation, product improvement and the things vital to the recapture of industrial markets in a highly competitive world economy, but what has happened? Overall, the figures since the Conservative party took office show that research and development have fallen in manufacturing industry by no less than 6 per cent. In the sector with the highest growth rate worldwide, information technology, since the Government took power a relatively neutral position in our balance of trade has been turned into a deficit of £2·3 billion. With unchanged policies, that deficit is projected to reach £10 billion. Employment in that sector has fallen by 12 per cent. since 1980 and British production has increased by only 44 per cent., while imports have increased by 110 per cent. That is the real world, and the one which the Minister appears to be ignoring. If there is time, when he replies to the debate, I hope that he will address himself to that world.

Every impartial observer knows that the position is grave. What is true of information technology is true of the whole spectrum of British manufacturing industry. Lack of industrial innovation is pervasive and increasing. The United Kingdom is losing out because of lack of product and process development in one market after another.

Let us again consider information technology and look at the NEDO report published at the end of last year, entitled "Crisis facing UK Information Technology". It states that it is

"concerned that the industry is close to a threshold below which an independent, broad based UK IT industry would no longer be viable."

Perhaps the Minister will square that with his earlier remarks. The report continues:

"We believe that new policies are urgently needed, on the part of industry and of government, to attempt to reverse the decline before it is too late."

The decline is there, and it is pervasive. It is happening in information technology and microelectronics, and the only reaction from the Government was a five-month moratorium imposed at the end of last year and surreptitiously introduced while my right hon. and learned friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was at the Dispatch Box, the outcome of which was to cut the already grossly inadequate support for industry by £10 million. Those are the facts and the figures which we have put across from the Dispatch Box time and time again.

If the Minister does not believe me, he should read what the former Secretary of State, predictably elevated to chairman of his party, said—that there would be less in real terms. Of course there is less in real terms—that is the whole burden of this Government's policy. It is to provide less and expect industry to do more. That would work if other countries felt the same way, but we know that they do not. Other countries are investing far more in their support for innovation and the design and development of new products and processes in their industries. It would work if there was any evidence that industry was, in fact, making that investment, but all the evidence is to the contrary. Research and development investment is down 6 per cent., and investment itself is down 25 per cent. From where will the rebirth and the regeneration come?

If the Minister does not accept what I say, let him read what Richard Bullock has said. I believe that he was a deputy secretary in the Minister's Department. He is a formidable mandarin and no supporter of my party. He is now secretary of the Electronic Components Industry Federation. He said about Government support for innovation:

"We are pleased the electronics grants have been released from the moratorium but in comparison with our European competitors the money looks pretty feeble."

Of course it does, because it is.

Last year—the most recent figures available—the Government invested £38 million in electronics—a growing sector and the centre of what is happening in information technology. That compares with West Germany's support of £61 million and French support of £188 million. That is the true face of Government support for industrial innovation—accept the minimum that the Treasury will concede and then cut it further to show the Prime Minister what good boys they are. We expect the Department of Trade and Industry to support innovation in industry, not to kow-tow cravenly to the Treasury's obsessive preoccupation with cutting Government expenditure.

[Mr. Geoffrey Robinson]

The Labour party believes that it is not yet too late to deal with the fundamental problems. There is no need yet to become fatally pessimistic about British industry's capacity to innovate and regain markets in key technologies. The key technologies are well known to all hon. Members — microelectronics, computer-aided design and manufacture, second generation robotics that have vision, biotechnology and fibre optics. What is needed is a policy along the broad lines of the Lords' report, which comes hard on the heels of numerous other reports — to all of which the Government have turned a deaf ear before they have read them.

We need a sound basis of continuing and greater Government support. We need the creative, positive use of Government purchasing power to back British products and British innovation. We need the provision of medium-term risk capital, working capital and capital for investment in plant, machinery and marketing over a medium-term period, at modest rates of interest. We need also—over a period of time because it will be difficult to get it—a determined effort to switch the emphasis of Government-funded research and development away from defence to civilian projects.

As all Opposition Members will be aware, the Minister's speech was an abject exercise in self-congratulatory illusions—illusions that the Government are supporting British design, when the public sector, its architecture, premises and facilities offer some of the lowest standards of design. When confronted with an opportunity to extend the economic case for good design to the social enhancement of people's relationship with Government Departments, with inevitable bureaucracy the Government have resolutely refused to put their money behind their words of support.

Even worse than the Government's refusal to take a lead and set an example in the area of design has been their three-pronged attack on Britain's ability to carry out industrial innovation. They have cut our research establishments, cut the research carried out at universities, and cut the output of key graduates in the key technologies that we need for the future. There are fewer people now graduating in engineering, electronics and computer technology than when the Government took office. Above all, they have reduced their support for innovation.

Those policies must be reversed. We must have a positive planning mechanism for deciding key innovative technologies for the future. We must have the will to finance them, jointly with the private sector, in a medium-term programme. We must have a sustained programme of support for fundamental research in the universities and research councils. All of that can be done only by a Government who believe in working with industry, who believe that British industry can innovate and compete, who believe that British industry can regain lost markets and who believe that it is the job of the Government to work with industry to enable that to be done.

The present Government have lost faith in British industry. Nothing that we heard from the Minister today can lead us to any other conclusion, ignoring the rhetoric and considering only the facts. Before the doom-laden prophesy of the Lords' report is borne out, the Labour party will be returned to power to carry forward industrial product and process innovation as a basis for rebuilding our manufacturing sector.

6.21 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): We thought that this would be a quiet debate at the end of the Session, but it is clear from the peroration of the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) that it is likely to be livened up somewhat. However, it is not inappropriate to hit at the question of innovation and design because the subject has been neglected for long by the House. I suppose that, as a subject, it stretches all the way from Habitat, the company, to Hiroshima, because there are good and bad things about design.

While I have no desire to upstage the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West following his remarks about the report from the House of Lords, he should recall that the House of Commons Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, reported on the subject matter of the debate a year ago and drew the attention of hon. Members to the fact that we are in a parlous situation in terms of our manufacturing industry.

The Lords pointed out that if our oil ran out at the end of this century, we should be faced with a balance of payments problem, which would have to be solved, of about £10 billion a year. This represents about 1 million jobs. We shall have to solve that problem, but it will not be solved in the way in which some of the economics twitterers sitting on the safe perches in Fleet street believe it can be solved, simply by switching to service industries.

Following the excellent start that the Minister gave the debate, I hope that my hon. Friend will appreciate that those of us who are deeply interested in the success of manufacturing in Britain are concerned about the wellbeing of the skills that are in industry and about the way in which, we hope, we can revive those skills to improve the employment and the wealth of the nation. While we have time to recognise the problems and do something about them, we do not have time to believe that such problems do not exist.

At the conclusion of this debate we shall probably all agree that action is essential, and I hope that the Minister will assure the House that the comments of hon. Members will give rise to action, because there is much in the fertile seeds of innovation that lie in the palm of the Government to develop, the Government being the bigget single customer in Britain and having the duty, whether they are or are not interventionist, to be an entrepreneur. In other words, the Government have a duty to respond to the opportunities that can be presented and to lead by example.

I declare an interest as an engineer with several patents to my name or to which I have contributed and as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. I have noticed in the work of the Royal Society of Arts during the five years or so during which I have been a Fellow that each year the society turns its attention to the way in which for many decades innovation has been neglected in Britain. I am pleased, therefore, that the Government are today rising to the chance as well as to the challenge of making innovation and design a catch phrase in their programme.

It is certain, in historical terms, that whether the opportunities of design and innovation come from the cultural and historical style of the Renaissance or from the needs of war, encouragement is essential and patronage by people and Governments has been proved in the past to be essential to make that flower flourish. One cannot make

people innovative. They can only be encouraged to do so. It is fascinating to note, for example, that more than a century ago a Select Committee of this House looked into the whole problem of arts and manufactures and the way in which to encourage innovation. Sir Lyon Playfair said at about that time

> "The engines of Watt and Stevenson have already expanded the wealth and resources, and even the territories, of England more than all the battles fought by her soldiers or all the treaties negotiated by her diplomats."

The Prime Minister did a marvellous job yesterday in the Bahamas, and I hope that the Foreign Office is on her side. The fact remains that in the present situation, which is not new, the contributions from the back benches of industry have advanced the abilities and wealth of the nation much more than they have been given credit for doing.

Innovation takes time. From invention to innovation — the encouragement of invention so as to achieve innovation — can take a great time. Simple and commonplace devices can take much longer to reach the market place than one might imagine. For example, the ballpoint pen took 58 years from invention to reaching the market place, and where would the House of Commons be today without that device? Detergents took 42 years to reach the market place. Magnetic tape recording — beloved by many of us, though I must be careful about the way in which I put this, considering the interests of our secretaries — took 39 years. The jet engine, to which the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West referred, took only 13 years, but with the incentive of war. The zipper, without which we could not do anything, took 32 years to reach the market place.

There is a long time constant between the reality of saying what we want to do and the actuality of a good product at a recognisable price in the market place. It is true, however, at the other end of the scale that commodities such as oxygen in steelmaking took only three years, and synthetic penicillin, thank goodness, took only two years to get from the invention stage to the market place.

I endorse the praise of the Minister for the Royal Society of Arts, the Design Council, the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers and BTEC. A clear theme emerges. We know how to innovate, how to design and how to get the tasks completed by producing products in the market place. The trouble is that time and again—this was stated in 1835 when, as I said, a Select Committee of the House looked into the very subject that we are debating today—we seem to have to invent the wheel. I am almost inclined to feel that a wheel is circular because it is a compromise of design, with hon. Members sitting round it trying to work out the optimum shape.

Six aspects are clear as to how to get good design going. The first is to achieve well designed artifacts. That means the ability to exchange knowledge about markets, designers, engineers and profit in such a way as to balance the whole. That is a feature of good companies strong in innovation and design, and it is nothing new.

The second aspect is good market research — an understanding of what people want — because the problem with innovation and design is to make sure that there is not just scientific push put market pull. The video cassette recorder is a good example of that. Wherever it was invented, Mr. Morita of Sony realised that the public wanted it before they knew they wanted it, and he pulled them towards the cassette recorder. Hence Japan's domination of that market.

The third aspect is product support, the fourth is represented by the good old word "flair", the fifth is design authority to make sure that somebody at the top of a company knows that there is a requirement for design authority and sees that it is exercised, and the sixth, probably the most important, is the need in companies to make sure that there is commitment and concern throughout top management to good practices. These requirements apply to manufacturers and to service industries such as tourism where the customer measures his own investment by the quality of the product. It all adds up to an attitude of mind.

There is another problem and it was identified by the Select Committee a year ago. The Select Committee in another place has also drawn Parliament's attention to it. Over the past 30 years the West Germans and the Japanese have increased their market share to the level that Britain enjoyed 30 years ago. Over the same period Britain's market share has just about halved. These are figures that cannot be ignored. They reflect the realities of competitiveness in the market place.

Over the past 30 years import penetration in manufactured goods has increased. In the 1950s, only about 5 per cent. of our manufactures were imported, but imports are now 30 per cent. What are the reasons for that?

Everyone argues that we must be competitive, and I suggest that there are two features to which we must pay attention, the first being price competitiveness. We are all familiar with the well-rehearsed arguments that are advanced on both sides of the House about inflation rates, the cost control of wages and the value of fluctuating exchange rates. I suggest that we do not pay enough attention to non-price factors.

It is unfortunate that there is not enough information on non-price factors and that that which is available is not particularly recent. The most recent information that I have found relates to 1965 and 1971. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to consider turning the resources of Government to the task of ascertaining what is going on in this area. About 20 years ago the following question was posed: "Why buy foreign machine tools in Britain?" Since then the machine tool industry, especially in the midlands, has suffered dramatically from not understanding the problem. Delivery, specification and the superiority of product support accounted for 84 per cent. of customer choice. Opportunities for reciprocal trade accounted for 11 per cent. and the price factor accounted for only 5 per cent. We must not believe that to contain ourselves within a low wage economy will make us export competitive. I believe that everyone should give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, but there should be a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Customer choice of non-price factors may explain why we see so many over-priced German cars on our roads. The Americans found that they were successful exporters when they had a high-wage economy. It is extraordinary that the non-price factors account for nearly two thirds of customer choice. It seems that price is not the most significant factor. If a company offers a good quality product and supports it well, it will attract customers. If price is so important, surely the United States, Switzerland and Sweden should have as much unemployment as we have.

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State made an excellent speech but I must challenge what he said about designers going abroad. He claimed that it was a good thing, but I find it a dangerous trend. Designers have gone abroad — the Royal Society of Arts conducted an investigation into this — because they are underpaid in Britain. Those with higher degrees or degrees find that they are earning only 5 per cent. more than those who have not bothered to qualify. That leads many to ask, "Why qualify?" About 60 per cent. of those who have qualified in fashion design are unemployed. I am sure that my hon. Friend does not wish skilled people to be faced with such a shortage of employment opportunities.

There are real problems for the future and this can be measured by the way in which patents are being registered. In 1984, six out of the top 10 companies in the United States registering patents were foreign owned and there was not one British company among them. The Americans are worried because they had only four out of the top 10. I am worried because Britain was not represented at all.

We have real opportunities to innovate and to use the skills of our designers. I commend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the work of the science policy research unit at Sussex university, which is examining how design and innovation can be encouraged. We have the ability to grow faster than we have so far. I am not happy with the present position. We must look to the Government to re-think their investment programme in terms of education and investment in basic science and technology. I commend that approach to the House.

6.36 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I am pleased to be able to take up some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), who has reminded the House of some of the harsh realities that face the country. He chairs the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which has often done the same.

On behalf of the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party I welcome the debate, which is directed to a subject that is sadly neglected by the House and, unfortunately, by many sectors of British industry. If the debate helps to draw attention to the importance of design in industry, it will have performed a useful function.

I welcome the support which the Government have given to design and which the Minister outlined. The role that he and the Prime Minister have played in supporting design and seeking to highlight the importance of it in industry is commendable and to be welcomed. I welcome their endeavours to draw more attention to the importance of innovation. I shall be critical of some aspects of Government policy, but I hope that the Minister will take my remarks so far as encouragement to do more and to do better and not as negative criticism. As I have said, I believe that the Government have taken on board the importance of design and innovation in their policy.

Why are industrial innovation and design so important? Visual enjoyment is important in all our lives. We must not lose sight of the fact that good design, whether it be in industry or any other part of our lives, helps to improve the quality of life. Good design is about more than creating new businesses or new jobs, although that will be the main focus of the debate. We should seek to encourage good design generally. I am sure that the main thrust of the debate will be on the contribution that design can make to the creation of jobs, new businesses and the improvement of the economy.

In the good old days, whenever they were, great importance was attached to design in industry, especially in the Victorian period. I read a book over the weekend in which there was an account of the Royal mining engineering industrial exhibition of 1887 in Newcastle. I read another report of the great exhibition which took place in 1908. The Anglo-French exhibition gave an area of London — it is one with which many of us are familiar because it includes the site of the BBC television centre — the name of White City. It was an enormous exhibition which included fine arts, visual arts, design, engineering and all other facets of British and French industry. It was much larger than the great exhibition of 1951. That reflects the spirit of those times and the importance which was attached to innovation and design. The new products and innovations that were such a hallmark of that period were brought into being and brought to the attention of the public generally by the professional institutions that are to be found in Newcastle, the area of Teesside which I represent, Darlington, other parts of the northern region and many other areas throughout the country.

I hope that the message to go out from this debate will be that, through innovation and good and new design, we can create jobs and new businesses. New businesses, products and technologies are important, but we sometimes spend so much time talking about new technologies that we forget that old products with new designs have enormous markets overseas and at home. Sometimes we forget that the new design of old products is important to the success of our industry.

Last Christmas I was sent a remarkable Christmas card from the Middlesbrough college of art and design. A small flat object snapped out into a box when it was taken out of the envelope. One side of the small tag on the red string hanging from the box said, "Here is a Christmas box for you." The other side said, "Have a drink on us." When the red string was pulled from the box there was a tea bag on the end of it. That was an ingenious attractive design with a potential for business success, but, as a Christmas card, it was not a new product. The Scandinavians, Italians, French and other overseas competitors have become leaders in the sale of domestic products because of the inventiveness of their designers.

There are many examples of similarly successful businesses in Britain. Sir Terence Conran's Habitat and similar businesses have good design as their hallmark. The marvellous Laura Ashley business—it is sad that Laura Ashley has died — is based upon good and striking design. Such design has created a successful business in rural Wales. Tremendous Government support was not needed to get it off the ground—innovation and design did so. There is a message for the regions: Through such design and innovation businesses can be developed—not in new but in old products—to satisfy customers in a manner that we would all welcome.

Design is an important aspect of our industrial life. Anyone who is tempted to underestimate its importance should remember its role. We should remember the superbly designed Concorde and the crowds of people who went to airports just to see it. That is what our businesses

must take on board if they are to compete with the Benettons of this world which place so much emphasis on design and succeed as a result.

The Government have taken this point on board. They have started to provide additional support to the Design Council. I understand that this year they will give an additional £1·5 million to the council, bringing its central funding up to £4·8 million. The precariousness of this funding is illustrated by the fact that it has only just now recovered to its 1980 level after substantial cuts in previous years and the fact that it is renewed on a year-by-year basis. I hope that the Department of Trade and Industry will give the Design Council longer-term security in the schemes and promotions in which it is involved. Uncertainty about future budgets inhibits the council's work.

I welcome the backing given to the £350,000 campaign to promote the use of industrial product design by United Kingdom managers. This is a welcome development, but there is no guarantee about how long it will continue. It would be helpful if the Under-Secretary of State were to look at the longer term when giving such grants to the Design Council and similar bodies.

Industrial design and innovation are important aspects of a strategy to promote competitiveness which should include other non-price factors such as quality, reliability, delivery, marketing and after-sales service. Such a total product approach involving services and goods is essential if the decline in Britain's manufacturing competitiveness is to be reversed.

Horrendous figures face us on this front. In recent years, our manufacturing competitiveness has declined dramatically. The Design Council's report "Design and the Economy" shows a reduction over the past 30 years from 25 per cent. to 9 per cent. in the United Kingdom's export share of world trade in manufactured goods. This contrasts with an increase in imports from about 6 per cent. to about 30 per cent. of total sales. The import figures for some of the worst product areas show an increase in imports of 84 per cent. for music centres, 80 per cent. for scissors and 43 per cent. for electric cookers. Home production of many products has been almost decimated. We face an enormous task if we are to overcome the effects of the blow that has hit British industry during the past decade.

Cuts in training and education have played a major part in this decline. The United States, with approximately 60 scientists and engineers employed in research and development per 10,000 of the labour force, has roughly twice as many people employed in this work as the United Kingdom. Japan leads the field in expenditure on research and development, having almost doubled research and development expenditure in a recent eight-year period. Other countries cited in the Design Council's report have made significant increases. The United Kingdom alone decreased expenditure by more than 20 per cent. Distribution in other countries of research and development expenditure differs significantly from the United Kingdom where three sectors alone — chemicals, electrical engineering and aerospace — account for 71 per cent. of total research and development activity. Figures on research and development and on the number of engineers and others who are crucial to innovation and design show Britain's devastating position.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will encourage those of us who want a comprehensive training and education system—rather than the ad hoc-ery of the past few years — the restoration of some grants to research councils and a proper dovetailed system of training and education so that those on YTS are given credit for the work that they have done, enabling them to qualify in other spheres. This is part of the building-block approach to education which can help Britain to involve similar numbers of people in training and education as are involved in Germany, Japan and the United States. Without that basis of innovation and industrial design policy and the education to back them up, we shall not achieve any of the goals that the Government have set themselves and that the rest of the country would like to be achieved.

6.49 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I should like to return to the subject of design and mention first the considerable achievements that we have made in this country in recent years. Her Majesty's Government are doing more than any other Government in the world to promote design as an instrument of competition. Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's celebrated design evening at Downing street, an immense flood of activity has poured forth.

My hon. Friend the Minister, despite the mealy-mouthed condemnation of the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), should receive credit for what has been achieved. There is not a soul in the design world who would not wholeheartedly acknowledge his tireless work. That was marked internationally when in August he received, on behalf of Britain, an award in recognition of services to design. There is no credibility gap there, as suggested by the hon. Gentleman: there is world acknowledgement.

Next summer, the annual design conference, which includes architecture — not so far mentioned — will be held in Aspen, Colorado, and four and a half days will be devoted entirely to design in the United Kingdom. There is no credibility gap there either.

A great deal is going on abroad, but a great deal is going on at home. For example, over 2,000 companies have benefited from the Department of Trade and Industry's funded consultancy scheme. That is design in action. The British Institute of Management is increasing its activity on this subject. NEDO has established a working party to review the state of design in Britain and how it can become a more integral and effective part of manufacturing. It will report next summer. That is also design in action.

We also have design in education, as my hon. Friend the Minister said. While the National Advisory Body is reviewing the distribution of courses, it is clear that the general thrust is to make design courses relevant to work. In March this year, a two-day conference of principals of colleges in the United States met in Philadelphia to discuss the new style of design education evolving in the United Kingdom. There is no credibility gap there. The results of a job survey held among all students who completed BTEC higher national diplomas in design last year were especially encouraging. Within three months four fifths of the students had full-time jobs and 95 per cent. of those jobs were in the subject studied. A further 13 per cent. of young designers had started their own firms or were freelancing. That may be a new trend in our society.

Hon. Members will also be aware of the highly successful series of "Design by Experience" seminars held around the country last year. Organised by BTEC, their

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

aim was to bring companies and colleges closer together. That initiative was supported by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science, who was listening to the debate earlier, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren.)

At a different level, the London Business School runs an oversubscribed course of design management in its Master of Business Administration programme, and a few other business schools are beginning to do the same. That all illustrates design in action. There is no credibility gap there. However, despite all that push and action, there remains a huge gap between the enthusiasm of the protagonists and the reluctant behaviour of large swatches of manufacturing.

We are approaching the start of 1986, which is designated as industry year as an initative of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. That is a rather quaint old name, which disguises enormous vitality and energy. Its aim is to increase understanding of industry's role and its service to this country. We must ask why industry is still reluctant to embrace good design. Why can that be? Britain has the designers. There is no other place on earth where one can find such a concentration of internationally experienced designers. They may sometimes be found within the House, but certainly they may be found within one or two miles of it. It is a pity that a major nationalised industry such as British Airways felt it necessary to go abroad for its recent major livery redesign when Great Britain can offer the best in the world. Our designers' skill is often better understood in other countries, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye said.

In the past year alone, the top six offices earned some £50 million in foreign revenue. That helps the balance of payments, but it also means that we are helping our competitors. It has been said that there is no important automotive firm in Europe and no important fashion house without British designers in senior positions.

If we have those resources, skills and effort, why do not more British firms accept the role of design in their affairs? Could it be that too many companies are run by financial men, who care more for cutting costs than the products they make? That perhaps goes for the Treasury as well. Is it because the City has such a short time-frame that it does not encourage companies to invest in new products, but rather looks for short-term profit, or is it because business men think of design as art—nice, but not necessary, the type of trim that is added to make something look nice? Is it the old belief that the public do not like good design? My goodness, if Sony, Suzuki and Toyota produced ugly goods that would prove it, but they do not. Is it that even our engineers believe that design is peripheral, as if people, users, and customers do not matter?

The problem is a management one. In that regard, it is notable that the London Business School funded the world's first design management programme. Manchester is now following. The essential task is to bring understanding into business that design matters—design not as decoration or taste, but in the fuller sense of thinking matters through and creating the goods that people want and will pay for.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am following with care what my hon. Friend is saying. I agree with what he says. Does he agree that it is symbolic that British industry rarely has a designer on the board of directors?

Mr. Rathbone: That is a good illustration of the point that I was making. I hope that industry will follow the example of motor companies in the United States, which do not just have designers on the board but have designers as chairmen.

While much excellent work is being done, a note of warning should perhaps be sounded. Design by itself will not do the trick, nor will the notion that design is about taste. I do not mean that design should be ugly, but rather that its purpose, like the purpose of industry, is to satisfy customers. Products make profits only when effectively marketed through proper packaging, brand identification and communication. Brand reputation depends to a large degree on corporate reputation and identity. I wonder whether the consultancy scheme is sufficiently directed to such ends. I speak as someone involved with a company that undertakes such consultancy programmes and one who hopes that the scheme will be promoted in that way.

If there is one other practical step that my hon. Friend the Minister could now accomplish it would be to encourage the Design Council to regard design as part of a process for satisfying customers. The relationship between that process called marketing and design is too little understood.

To conclude, I should like to return to my first point. My hon. Friend the Minister is doing a famous job by encouraging better design, ably assisted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. This evening, my hon. Friend has outlined how he is planning further encouragement of design and manufacturing. More strength to his elbow.

6.59 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): This is a historic debate, as the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) said. It was rather surprising that there was not one single Back Bencher on the Labour Benches during the whole of the hon. Gentleman's speech. He was rather like a parade sergeant on an empty parade ground barking orders with no one to hear. It is right that we should be debating this subject because it is of immense importance for the creation of new jobs and for the regeneration of our industry. It is perhaps strange that in the long history of this parliamentary body that industry, during the time it was supreme in the world, during the Victorian period and in the early part of this century——

It being Seven o'clock, and there being private business set down by THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS *under Standing Order No. 7 (Time for taking private business), the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill hall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to roceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of arliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to he Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before he close of the present Session of their intention to suspend urther proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date e paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next ession the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed y the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in very respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in is House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one f the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the louse after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, hen so laid, shall be read the first and second time and ommitted (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as aving been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present ession which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall and referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on e Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time mited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to aragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to rivate Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing rder 126 (Reference to committee of petitions agaist bill)" were nitted;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any oceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already en incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The hairman of Ways and Means.]*

pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I ould inform the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected e amendments. I call Mr. Tim Yeo.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I do not believe that is necessary to have a debate.

1 pm

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I have not participated in debate of this kind, objecting that a motion be carried er, since I have been a Member of the House, and it is rtainly not my intention to be obstructive. The number times I have spoken on private Bills is very small. evertheless, I am speaking on this one because I have a itical constituency interest in the matter and there is still enormous amount of dissatisfaction from environ- ental groups and others in my part of East Anglia about e substance of this Bill.

I do not intend to waste the time of the House, but rtain issues arise and I am objecting to the carry-over otion, if I can put it like that, because of the material that ll remains in this Bill and for the arguments that are still ing used to put this Bill through the House. I am given understand that it is a matter of usage that these matters e carried over, usually on the nod. I do not see why that ould always be so, nor why it should be automatic, rticularly if new material has arisen on the issue under cussion.

I shall not speak at any great length, but new factors ve arisen since the Bill was debated on Second Reading, d it is because of that new material that I wish to make hort speech of objection to the whole principle of the ry-over motion.

The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company should be made to argue the case again. The three-hour debate we had before was wholly insufficient to give critical scrutiny to the arguments made in the House. We have another chance, which I welcome, of debating the controversial material contained in the propositions for the Bill. Undoubtedly, some people will find the whole issue tiresome and think it would be far more convenient for us all to push the thing through and carry it over because that is the axiomatic precedent. I do not agree, because last time we had limited time at our disposal and many things were not discussed adequately.

I do not want to go over the material I went over last time because I have fresh things to say and fresh arguments to put before the House on the terms of my objection to this motion. I wish to do so for general reasons, but also because my constituency is directly affected and the dissatisfaction still remains. One new piece of material has arisen from the discussions on the guarantees relating to navigation and the Orwell estuary. When I spoke on Second Reading, my objections to the Bill centred on three areas. The first was the effect on the port of Ipswich, especially but not solely as it was affected by navigational matters. Secondly — and I have new material on this point too—I objected on environmental grounds because environmental opinion in the area is overwhelmingly against the Bill. It was then and it is now.

My third point relates to arguments centred upon developing balanced ports capacity, and the possible repercussions that a laissez-faire approach to port development will have on the industry as a whole. I am still not convinced on any of these grounds, but I recognise that assurances have been given and accepted about the possible navigational interference with ships, particularly grain vessels, using the Orwell estuary. I am pleased to say that and, without making too much of it, I understand that the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company through the Harwich harbour authority is willing to give the Ipswich port authority financial and priority guarantees about the passage of vessels. This came about in discussions since the Bill was last before the House.

I am pleased to see the Minister in his place and should like to ask him for a piece of information which he could perhaps give me when he speaks in the debate. I am given to understand, quite literally in the last 24 hours, that it will not be possible to give legislative authority to the guarantees under or within the framework of any Harwich harbour legislation because such guarantees, particularly with financial backing, would be ultra vires. I would appreciate the Minister's information on that. I was pleased to see these guarantees, or promises of them at least. As I understand it, they will have to be as part and parcel of private legislation sought by the Ipswich port authority when it seeks additional powers some time in the next Session.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will my hon. Friend give way? This concession is obviously important, but does it not illustrate the problem? The Bill made virtually no progress other than getting its Second Reading in the last Session, and it will be easy for the promoters to drop it and introduce in the next Session a new Bill which could, of course, have a much wider scope than this one and could take into account the point made by my hon. Friend. If they persist in going for the carry-over motion, the Bill will have to remain in its narrow

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

form and it will not be possible for the House to amend it to take into account even the concession the promoters now want to make.

Mr. Weetch: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. What he says is certainly correct. If a new Bill were drafted incorporating all the assurances that have been given and perhaps any assurances that would arise from new discussions, which I would welcome, it may be that the new legislative shape of this measure could be put before the House to some advantage. I certainly accept what my hon. Friend has said.

I am dissatisfied with the current situation and one of the things I want to do is to challenge the whole of the economic case for the expansion of the port. The issue at the centre of the economic part of the debate is how many jobs the new extension at Felixstowe will create. In fact, the issue is narrower than that, because the relevant question is how many real new jobs will be created.

I argued in our previous debate that the Bill would not create many new jobs and would merely shift jobs from place to place and have detrimental repercussions on other ports, particularly Liverpool, Tilbury and Southampton.

A real increase in employment possibilities will depend on the traffic throughput of Felixstowe. I have new material in support of my objections to the motion. No statistical case had been made to the House in favour of the expansion of the port and the claim that net new jobs will be created. I have examined everything said in the previous debate and all the comment in newspapers and specialist journals. It is 100 per cent. assertion, and partial and slanted assertion at that.

We did not have time in the previous debate to challenge the statistical merits of the case and the assumptions on which arguments were mounted. I intend to do that today. Statistics in the ports industry are enormously complicated. They depend on the capacity of a port and the capacity of other ports, as well as on the capital intensity of improvements, the mix of traffic and any changes in that mix.

The crux of my attack on the economic case of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is that much will depend on Felixstowe's ability to attract real trade growth as opposed to attracting trade away from other ports in East Anglia and elsewhere.

Independent experts who have studied the subject—I quoted two in our previous debate, so I shall not quote any more—believe that no real jobs will be created and that it is likely that there will be a shift in jobs from area to area with detrimental repercussions on ports elsewhere. We need information and details and I regret that we are unable to get from the company the necessary information to make a decision in principle. We lacked that information during our previous debate and it has not been provided for this debate. I can see that I could be said to be putting forward a case that is partial in a constituency sense, but I have tried to get the information required by writing to the company. It seemed to me that, as the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, if I wanted to know the likely new throughput of traffic as a result of the expansion of the dock and the creation of three new berths, I should write to the company.

Therefore, I wrote to the company on 25 April and asked for its estimate of the new traffic that it thought would arise from the expansion outlined in the Bill. That would have enabled me to make a responsible estimate of whether the case would stand on its economic base. I received a letter from the managing director who said that he did not feel disposed to supply the information to me because I appeared to be an "implacable opponent" of the Bill, because of my "profound ignorance" of the British ports system and because I was the recipient of "mischievous advice" from third parties.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that people who make such insulting remarks are usually trying to put up a smokescreen over the fact that they do not know the answers? Is it not true that the promoters do not have a clue about how many extra ships or containers they want to get, because they have no idea what developments will occur over the next two years? For example, the building of a fixed link across the Channel would have fundamental implications for British docks and would make the Felixstowe development highly questionable.

Mr. Weetch: That is right. I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I appreciate that the company will present a detailed case if the Bill reaches its Committee stage. I am not asking for a Committee debate at this stage. I ask merely for sufficient information to enable us to decide whether the Bill should go ahead.

I asked the company for answers and for statistical projections so that I could set out the case for independent examination. I did not get those answers and the House and I are left with mere assertions that there will be substantial economic benefits that will make the enterprise worth the violation of an area of outstanding natural beauty in Suffolk and a site of special scientific interest.

As I received no answers from the company, I had to look for statistical information that was available in public places, and there is plenty of that. First, in a letter received by the planning committee of Suffolk county council before its meeting on 9 October last year, the company said that it expected that the full development proposed in the Bill would produce a net increase of 500 in the company's own direct work force. That is set out in the planning committee's report and evidence, which I have read carefully.

However, the company subsequently advised the Suffolk county council that the figure was not 500, but 1,000. In the space of a relatively few hours, the job creation part of the estimate had doubled, for no apparent reason except a drumming up of support for a doubtful case.

It was also said that 400 new jobs would be created by further investment in the Languard and Dooley terminals and the construction of the Trinity terminal. That brought the grand total of new jobs to 1,400. The Felixstowe port users' association was reported in the *East Anglian Daily Times* as expecting the employment of an additional 1,400 people directly. In the same newspaper on 6 November last year, Mr. Derek Kingston of the company predicted 1,100 new jobs, based on known manning levels and predicted levels of technology.

Those are four or five examples of where the estimate of the number of new jobs to be created has differed every time someone has spoken. They think of a number and multiply it by two. I hope that the House will agree that this is a pretty doubtful statistical case to put in order to obtain permission from the House for a Second Reading.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those of us who know about ports and their growth realise that it may be very difficult indeed to establish exactly how many jobs would be created under certain hypothetical growth conditions. On thing, however, is quite certain: if a port is constrained so that it cannot grow there will be no growth of jobs there. The jobs will be created in other ports overseas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We seem to be straying a little out of order. When the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) puts forward his argument that a new Bill should be presented because of new material, that is in order, but when we go outside that argument to refer to matters that could very well have been discussed on Second Reading that is out of order.

Mr. Weetch: I tried to show that the material was simply not available on Second Reading. With the material not being available, how could we discuss the exact terminology of this Bill and what it seeks to do? I am arguing therefore that the Bill has no justification in reason at all. Every proposition in this Bill has to be reasoned out in some way or another. What I am trying to point out to the House is that the whole basis is the swamp that Felixstowe used to be 20 or 30 years ago, and we are being asked to put our names to a pretty gimcrack case in this carry-over motion.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) who has touched on a very important matter in relation to the projected number of jobs likely to be created if this Bill were to proceed unimpeded. If my hon. Friend were to cast his mind back to six weeks ago, he would agree that what can be described as new and fresh evidence was brought to light in respect of the proceedings on this Bill, and he and I will share the same concern. The Department of Transport issued a circular indicating that it had appointed specialists to advise the Secretary of State about the viability or otherwise of the various projects on the Channel fixed link. I was in Dover three weeks ago——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman making an intervention? If so, he must be brief.

Mr. Stott: Verbosity is not the least of my victims, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am attempting to be brief, but, in order to assist my hon. Friend on the point that he is making, it is important to recognise that the port of Dover in terms of volume and value moves more cargo than does Felixstowe.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot see that this has anything to do with the motion before the House.

Mr. Stott: I would not wish, on the first day back, to be in your bad books, Sir, but I think that it has everything to do with the point that my hon. Friend was making.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It may have everything to do with the point that the hon. Member was making, but it has nothing to do with the motion before the House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are, as I understand it, debating a carry-over motion. I think that some of us observed that the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) came down to do a bit of quiet lobbying, but it seemed to me that we were going along very nicely——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that I am not misunderstanding the reference to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). Neither he nor anyone else has lobbied me about anything today.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I was not suggesting that he had lobbied you, Sir, but it seemed to me that we were firmly in order in that on the Opposition side we were objecting to the carry-over motion on the basis that there was new evidence which had come forward. My hon. Friend referred to the fact that it was a statutory instrument. My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and I have referred to the possibility of the Channel fixed link, information which was not available at the Second Reading. These were all reasons that could be put forward as to why the Bill at this stage should not proceed further and why the promoters should come forward in the new Session with a new Bill and provide the House with new information, or let the whole matter drop. It seemed to me that we were not straying out of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I suppose that we are in the area of opinion, but it is my opinion that the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) was getting out of order insofar as it would be open, I suppose, given the constantly changing nature of ports and other features of the economy, to argue that any change in any port or any evidence of change in the economy would have relevance to the matter that we are discussing. If that were the case and were accepted by the Chair, I do not think that we would get to the motion tonight. We cannot stray so far out of order. I felt that I was being very flexible and tolerant to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). He recognises that. I think that we ought to get closer to the argument being originally advanced by him.

Mr. Weetch: After that exchange, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome your tolerance because I am no constitutional expert on the procedures of the House, and I constantly need advice. However, I try to avoid wasting the time of the House with arguments that I have put forward before. I looked up the precedents—and there are not many—for this type of debate and looked at some of the speeches made on previous occasions when this type of motion was debated. The speeches usually say that the objection to the carry-over motion is for reasons a, b, c and d; and one of those reasons is usually new material that has arisen in the course of time.

I put that to the House not in any sense of constitutional chicanery or because I want to make a long speech, but because I genuinely believe that new issues have arisen which critically affect the substance of this Bill. I do not want to abuse the time of the House. I am, therefore, willing to give way. But let us take it to its logical conclusion. If all we are going to debate is a few lines of constitutional patter, there will be no argument about the Bill on a valuable occasion like this so that in the end we might as well pack up our marbles and go home. I give way again.

Mr. Stott: When we debated this matter on 13 May, the Government had not issued their instructions or guidelines to the particular company charged with evaluating the various schemes that the Government have asked for on the fixed Channel link. We did not have at that time, therefore, any indication of whether the Government were going to support in principle the fixed

[Mr. Stott]

Channel link. It is obvious from what they have done since then, in spite of what anybody may or may not think, that the fixed link may very well go ahead. If it does, it will have tremendous ramifications for our ports policy in the United Kingdom. What my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) is attempting to adduce this evening is that the projections given by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company could be put in serious jeopardy if the fixed Channel link were to go ahead, because the volume of cargo currently going through the port of Dover is greater in both value and volume than that going through the port of Felixstowe. That must have consequences for what is happening in the House tonight.

Mr. Weetch: In the flurry of exchanges which we have had in the last few minutes, I neglected to answer the intervention of the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths). It was a fair intervention and he made a fair point. Of course one cannot with any certainty predict how many jobs, down to the last 10, 20 or 30, will be created. This is a very hazardous business and it is fraught with uncertainty. I may say, however, that none of the uncertainties has been mentioned in the press or elsewhere by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company. It has been putting forward these economic arguments with the certainty of a weighing machine on Victoria station that speaks one's weight. It has been saying that the statistics mean that employment in East Anglia will take a substantial lift. All that I am doing is to challenge that assertion and say that, if that is so, could we have approximate chapter and verse?

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who moved the Second Reading of the Bill, referred to 2,400 jobs created indirectly because of a multiplier effect. However, he did not refer to 500, 1,000, 1,400 or 1,100. I have taken the statistics available and 'phoned round a large part of the ports industry, and nobody will believe that those figures are at all credible.

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman said that he had made inquiries of the dock company about the benefits of the scheme. Did he also make inquiries of the East Anglian branch of the Transport and General Workers Union? If so, did the union explain to him, as it has explained to others, that it is in favour of the Bill?.

Mr. Weetch: The national TGWU is opposed to the expansion because it will create even more capacity at a time when there is already excess capacity in Britain's docks. I have been to see the shop stewards from the TGWU in Ipswich three or four times. It is largely on their behalf that I am speaking. I also invited my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), our Front Bench spokesman, to check the situation. I do not know where the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) got his information about the TGWU in East Anglia. I have been seen not only by the TGWU's general secretary but by the union's eastern regional organiser. The only group of people in the TGWU who are in step are those on Felixstowe dock itself. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), who is a member of the docks group of the TGWU, will refer to that. However, I appreciate the intervention because that point should be clarified.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the area with the lowest unemployment and therefore the least need for new jobs is Felixstowe? Almost all the other docks that have been mentioned have higher unemployment, and it would be unfortunate if the jobs were taken from docks that have a far greater need of them and transferred to Felixstowe. According to the figures that my hon. Friend mentioned, how many would be new employees and how many people would be simply transferring from one dock area to another?

Mr. Weetch: I shall come shortly to a statistical argument which is based on figures that I have, and that were taken from public places.

Since 1979, unemployment in the Ipswich and Felixstowe area has increased by 300 per cent. Whose fault is that? The statistical validity of the dock and railway company's case is doubtful. Let me come to the brass tacks. It is important to realise that the relationship is concerned not necessarily with port capacity, but with the estimate of throughput of extra traffic related to the numbers employed. That depends on a complicated set of equations. Nevertheless, we can have a go.

From 1979 until July 1984 the company had increased its direct work force by 200 in round figures. During that period the throughput tonnage, taken from the company's handbook, grew from 5·5 million tonnes to 8·5 million tonnes. The important relationship, assuming similar labour and capital intensity—in fact, the figures go my way if there is any more capital intensity in the development—is that between the cargo throughput and the number employed. Therefore, an increase of 3 million tonnes in throughput was needed to bring about 200 new jobs. We are being promised 1,400 jobs— 1,000 at the three new berths and 400 at the Languard and Dooley terminals. Given the same relationship, an extra 21 million tonnes will be needed to create an extra 1,400 direct jobs at the dock. If one adds the present output of 8·5 million tonnes, in round figures one is calculating on a total Felixstowe throughput of about 30 million tonnes. To put that in perspective, that is three times the current throughput of all the haven ports put together — Harwich, Felixstowe and Ipswich.

I can find no serious statistician who actually believes that case. Nevertheless it is being foisted on the East Anglian public with the argument that if the development does not go ahead there will be a shortage of this and that, and a jobs catastrophe. The job creation exercise of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is sheer moonshine. That is all it is. However, although I have put my case as strongly as I can, I stand to be corrected by statistical argument from Conservative Members, to which I would listen carefully.

The statistical case is pretty doubtful. Not only is the development of the further extension of Felixstowe outlined in the Bill at a time of excess deep sea container capacity elsewhere, but it is becoming even more questionable in the regional context of East Anglia. Another new piece of information that I wish to put before the House is that across the estuary from us, at Bathside bay, is being developed a deep sea container port described by Mr James Sherwood of British Ferries as a container port that will rival Felixstowe itself. Parliamentary powers already exist for that expansion.

The latest information on the development is contained in the magazine *Containerisation International*, which

says that Sealink British Ferries has announced plans to expand its Harwich Parkeston quay terminal with the ambitious aim of transforming it into one of Europe's largest container ports by mid-1987. It will be based on considerable land reclamation. It will cater for the biggest deep sea vessels, and expand massively the deep sea container throughput. Given that the dock and railway company's case is doubtful anyway, when one considers the capacity being developed just across the water, what will happen? There will be excess capacity in East Anglia, a crippling price war and a gross waste of resources.

I should like to reply to one argument because it has been put to me so many times. Indeed, it has been brought up in the debate as a piece of new information. At the Labour party conference, I went to a presentation by Flexi Link. One of its props is European Ferries, the people promoting the Bill. At that meeting, there was a presentation of the reasons why the fixed link should not go ahead. The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, opposing the fixed link proposals, is already beginning to recognise how traffic will be affected. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan pointed out in his intervention, the whole passenger and freight picture in this country could be transformed. The Government said absolutely nothing about that in the earlier debate, so I hope that the Minister will put that new material into the framework of his remarks when he is good enough to comment on the debate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: A great deal of the argument on Second Reading about extra traffic congestion being caused in East Anglia was based on the argument that ships which had come considerable distances to Europe would be off-loaded and the cargo sent on in smaller ships to other ports in Europe. Does my hon. Friend agree that if the fixed link were imposed it is likely that the majority of container cargo coming into Felixstowe would not go out again in smaller boats to Europe but would travel by road through East Anglia to the London basin and then through the fixed link at Dover? That would have far-reaching implications for congestion and the road network. We were told on Second Reading that congestion would not be a problem, but the new information shows that it may well be far more serious than was thought at that time.

Mr. Weetch: I accept the substance of my hon. Friend's intervention. The repercussions may well be as he describes. The substance of my argument is this. Without wishing to make predictions, the fixed link seems for the first time in my short political life to be a viable starter likely to attract private money and entrepreneurial initiative. The fixed link would put every port in the country, in East Anglia as much as anywhere else, in a completely new ball game. I do not agree that the situation outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is bound to occur because the whole situation is unpredictable, but I have read two stock market financial analyses of the prospects for European Ferries, both of which stated that the fixed link could be a major factor affecting the company's profitability.

All those factors will affect the Bill. All this new information — the statistical case, the fixed link and everything else—affect the argument in principle as to whether the Bill is necessary or not.

A constituency aspect is also affected. The argument involved is an insult to the intelligence of the people of Ipswich, but it has been so widely put about that I must try to deal with it seriously. It is widely argued that there could never be any active commercial threat to Ipswich from Felixstowe because the ports are complementary and not competitive. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said that, in effect, there was no commercial rivalry because:

"Felixstowe would be handling ships of a draught which could not navigate the upper reaches of the river." — [*Official Report*, 13 May 1985; Vol. 79, c. 75.]

In other words, there is no need to worry because large ships cannot use Ipswich anyway. But small ships can use Felixstowe. Ipswich is the number one port in the United Kingdom short sea container trade, but if there were pressure on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company's profit margins — if times became hard and competitive and the situation looked black — let no one imagine for a moment that that company would not directly affect Ipswich. Anyone who believes that will believe anything. Is the company really saying that it will never encroach any further on the type of trade dealt with at Ipswich? No commercial concern could ever say that. If it was in difficulties, it would do exactly that.

The point was summed up on page 17 of the January 1985 issue of the trade magazine *Cargo Systems International*, which states that

"if there is available capacity at Felixstowe, shipping lines will be tempted to stop there rather than carrying on another ten miles to reach Ipswich."

I shall not take that constituency point any further, but the argument has been put so often that I had to deal with it.

New material on the environmental case has also emerged since the issue was last debated. On 20 August the Orwell estuary was formally notified as a site of special scientific interest under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and a report of this appeared as an item on the agenda of Babergh district council planning committee. That was not the case when the Second Reading debate took place. A press report subsequent to the district council planning committee meeting conveyed some incomplete information, implying that only the south shore of the estuary had been notified as as SSSI. Today's debate gives me the opportunity to put on record that both banks have been notified, including the area proposed for the Felixstowe docks extension. If there is any doubt about that in anyone's mind the Nature Conservancy Council, which was responsible for the notification, will give full information.

The arguments adduced in the last debate for sweeping the whole environmental case under the carpet have been bitterly resented in some parts of East Anglia. It was argued that as only a small part of the estuary was involved there could not be much of a case. In fact, the site was selected by the Nature Conservancy Council after the most thorough scientific survey and evaluation. It is important to remember, too, that such designations are usually made because the areas concerned contain important concentrations of bird life.

In addition to being notified as a site of special scientific interest, the Orwell-Stour estuary has been put forward to the Department of the Environment as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar convention and as a special protection area for birds under an EEC directive of 1979.

Time and again in the last debate Conservative Members argued that the area to be taken for the port extension—Fagbury flats—was only a small part of the

[Mr. Weetch]

estuary and therefore of little consequence environmentally. The hon. Member for Cambridge—I am not sure whether he is here today—reminded the House that at one time he had United Nations environmental responsibilities. In a nostalgic way, he said:

"The hon. Member for Ipswich may not be aware of the fact that I know the river well. I have sailed on it since I was a child. It is one for which I feel strongly. I also feel strongly about the local environment. To go as far as he did about a scheme which covers one third of a square mile and only half a mile of 22 miles of rather grotty shoreline is carrying argument a little too far."

I see that the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) is here. I hope that after the debate he will take the hon. Member for Cambridge aside and explain that the shoreline is not regarded in East Anglia as "grotty". It is enormously valuable for all sorts of environmental reasons. Perhaps the hon. Member for Cambridge has not been to the area for some time, and needs reminding of this fact.

When the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds moved the Bill on 13 May, he said:

"First, the shoreline of the River Orwell is 22 miles long. The proposed extension covers half a mile of that shoreline—2·5 per cent. of the total area."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1985; Vol. 79 c. 77-91].

He went on to say that the area to be taken is only one-third of a square mile out of the total of 151 square miles.

That is an argument typical of people who talk about areas of international wildlife importance as though they are talking about percentages in a ledger. It is not surprising, because the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company works from ledgers, while others see the environmental problems. If the Bill is passed, everything that the company has said about protecting the environment will be conveniently forgotten.

The main environmental organisations in East Anglia are against the Bill to a man and a woman. They will believe that nothing that has been said in the first debate or the arguments that have come out since it has put them off their original environmental case. In fact, they have been strengthened in their determination.

In one breath, the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is saying both that the area is not important because it is small in relation to the whole, and that it regards the area of such importance that it intends to plant 500,000 trees, and provide a bird count and so much enthusiasm that, by the sound of it, the company will be twining honeysuckle around the cranes. It is doing this to try to win some environmental respectability.

The debate has been valuable because it shows that the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company will say anything to get the Bill through the House, and that that will be conveniently forgotten. The environmental interests in East Anglia span all political persuasions. The people who have most strongly urged me to keep going have been card-carrying members of the Conservative party for nearly all their lives. I have told them that I shall gladly do that on their behalf. The Bill should not succeed and I sincerely hope that the House agrees with me.

7.53 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I am sure that, by the end of my speech, less charitable Members will think that I have an enormous bias towards the port of Southampton. However, I have tried to approach this in a logical and worthwhile manner. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) spoke several times about the environment, and the problems affecting it have not been given the same publicity as, for example, those affecting the bypass around Okehampton and Dartmoor. The environmental point has been let go by lack of argument. Later, I shall refer to some of the comments made by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

I am sure that my Government will be the first to support me in my logical commercial argument. Is it wise, when we are suffering from a lack of investment in industry and are trying to compete with overseas markets, to take a vast percentage of that investment money and put it into mud flats—against the environmental argument—to produce more container port capacity when there is over-capacity in the existing container ports?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must address himself to the motion before the House and not the motion that the Bill be given a Second Reading. That has been debated and decided on by the House. If the hon. Gentleman were to advance the argument that there are now factors that could not have been known when the House made that decision, and that might have affected that decision, that would be in order. However, it is not in order to rehearse arguments or to make new ones about Second Reading.

Mr. Hill: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The new facts emerged in the speech of the hon. Member for Ipswich, who spoke about the new European link. I remember when the proceedings on the Channel tunnel were stopped by the then Secretary of State for the Environment in the Labour Government, the late Mr. Crosland. I had written a document about the bridges and tunnels of Europe, in which I proved conclusively what an enormous effect a Channel tunnel would have, even then, before we had got into the container age that exists in the seaports now.

There is no doubt that if the Euro-link goes ahead in any form it will act as a magnet for container traffic. We are talking in the main about container traffic. It would be subterfuge by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company to pretend that it is interested in devising another port for all types of user. It is merely aiming at the substantial market. With China about to emerge as a world industrial giant and with Taiwan and Japan flooding the United Kingdom and the European seaboard with containers, the company's sole motive is to concentrate on profit through containers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to relate the hon. Gentleman's argument, interesting though it is, to the debate about whether the Bill should be carried over into the next Session. The hon. Gentleman must address himself more closely to the terms of the motion.

Mr. Hill: I suppose that I am becoming over-eager on the subject. When it was debated on 13 May, because of parliamentary commitments I was unable to attend the debate. However, I know that that will be no argument for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although, naturally, it tempts me to drift into other subjects from time to time.

The European link will have a great effect and the statistics that will be available if the debate is held over will benefit all political parties. I particularly fear that the job protection statistics have not been gone into with the

latest figures in mind. There has been a terrific change in seaports policy since May. For example, the statistics for Southampton are quite different from those in May. The port is now humming with work, and it has an anxious labour force which is viewing the debate with concern because it fears that the real statistics of job protection have not been analysed. It is not only a question of job creation. There will be job losses throughout the United Kingdom, some of them in the worst affected parts of the country.

The difficulty in arguing the case for more statistics is that they can be swayed one way or another, depending upon the attitude of the debater. The statistics which have been produced by the environmentalists, certainly by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, should be closely analysed. We can see this evening the lack of attention that is being paid to this private Bill, so its Second Reading may have been passed by the House almost by default. There may not have been a full analysis of the figures. It may not therefore have been possible to weigh the pros and cons——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No matter for what reason, the fact is that the House has debated the Second Reading of the Bill and has come to a decision upon it by granting it a Second Reading. We cannot have a post-mortem upon it now.

Mr. Hill: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for putting me back once again on the rails. Perhaps the recess has made my steering gear a little rusty. I fully take your point. I have raised the subject many times. I wonder whether private Bills would not have to be introduced if there were a United Kingdom ports policy. I have asked for such a policy dozens and dozens of times. Unfortunately, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has, with great courtesy, said that there is no time next week for such a debate to take place. If we were to be given an opportunity to discuss the Bill more thoroughly, could it not be combined with an appraisal of ports policy? Felixstowe is to be given more capacity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not the issue before the House. The issue is whether this Bill, to which the House has given a Second Reading, should be allowed to be continued in the next Session of this Parliament. We are not discussing the merits of the Bill.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the hon. Gentleman tell me whether the people of Southampton petitioned against the Bill? I suspect that they did not do so because they did not understand its ramifications when the Bill was presented last autumn. If the motion were to be defeated, the Bill would have to start again and the hon. Gentleman's constituents would have an opportunity to present a petition. If the hon. Gentleman were to develop the argument about extending the rights of petitioners, he might be on safe ground.

Mr. Hill: I am getting advice from all sides. This is the true comradeship of the House. I said earlier that I thought that the Bill had not received full scrutiny before it obtained its Second Reading. I do not believe that some of the ports that will be jeopardised by the Bill were able to get their statistics, facts and petitions together in time for a thorough-going debate on Second Reading. The small points that I am raising tonight inevitably mean that the Bill should be carried over into the next Session of Parliament.

May I now deal with the statement that I have received from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The area in question has recently been notified as a site of special scientific interest. That was not so previously. This matter should be discussed in more detail. The proposed development also encroaches upon an area of outstanding natural beauty. To hardhearted Members of Parliament these points may seem of little consequence, but in Japan environmental problems are now so great that they wish that they had considered the protection of the environment instead of indulging in a Gaderene rush to develop industry in order to compete with the rest of the world. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds would want to provide more facts and to involve more learned people in listening to and lobbying the Committee. That is why we must not be seen to be rushing through something upon which the fulcrum of a ports policy would depend. We would be the first to be accused of acting as vandals. Job projections are suspect and the House must discuss them more deeply.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your consideration——

Mr. Stott: As the hon. Gentleman is reaching the end of his contribution, may I say that I agree with every word that he has spoken this evening, but why on Second Reading did he not vote for or against the Bill, while the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen, (Mr. Chope) voted in favour of the Bill?

Mr. Hill: I said earlier that I was away on parliamentary business. I take great interest in the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Although we are rightly paired with Labour Members of Parliament, it is not always possible to be in the House for every vote. The debate was underplayed. There was no great unrest about it in my constituency, but there is now a great volume of protest. My constituents feel, as I do, that there has been insufficient discussion of the new statistics.

If the Bill is carried over into the next Session, democracy will have been served this evening. One has to take into account the environmental considerations, the various statistics, the effect of the Euro-link and several other points with which I shall not weary the House. I do not know whether they will be accepted by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), in whom I have great faith on ports policy and shipping matters. If, however, I do not receive satisfaction this evening and there is a vote, I shall be forced to vote against the motion.

8.8 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The question to which we ought to address ourselves tonight is whether we should agree to this carry-over motion or to any other carry-over motions on Bills of this type. It will encourage a different approach to legislation if it should become common practice for the House of Commons to agree to carry-over motions. The Government have to get through their legislation in one Session of Parliament, which imposes a considerable discipline upon them. It also gives the Opposition an opportunity to ensure that there is a good debate and sometimes to extract concessions so that the legislation may be passed in one Session. It also means that the general public know that there is a 12-month period—sometimes longer if a parliamentary Session is

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extended—during which a Bill is being debated and is likely to be changed. However, under a carry-over motion that discipline disappears. Proposals can be changed without people being certain of how they affect them.

In recent years, more and more legislation of this type has been carried over. Sometimes legislation has been carried over to a third Session of Parliament. That is undesirable. The Government have to complete their legislation in one Session. Back Benchers who introduce private Members' Bills have to succeed within one Session if they do not want to lose their proposed legislation. That imposes an effective discipline. However, private legislation can be carried forward from one Session to the next.

I understand the argument that private legislation is not the same as other parliamentary business. Petitioners might have to engage people to speak on their behalf, and Committee proceedings can take a long time. On some occasions the promoters will have done everything possible to speed up a Bill's progress. They will have met objectors, tried to reach compromises and suddenly a general election will intervene. In such circumstances, there is an argument for such a motion. However, in this case the promoters had 12 months to make progress with their Bill. So far the Bill has received only its Second Reading.

A Committee was appointed, but one of its members had an interest and was declared ineligible to serve. So far the promoters have not become involved in the expense of acting upon petitions. The promoters have made little attempt to make progress. On the whole, they have brushed aside the objectors or ignored them. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) described what happened when he asked for information. He was told that since he was against the Bill the promoters wanted nothing to do with him.

If we are to continue with the private Bill procedure, we should impose the same discipline on the promoters as we impose upon ourselves. They should aim to put their Bills through in one parliamentary Session.

We must consider what are suitable measures for private legislation. In the past, the House spent more time on private legislation than it does today. Canal, turnpike and railway measures took up more time than public business. Even then the promoters were expected to make concessions to get their legislation through the House in a reasonably short time.

The Manchester ship canal was the subject of a private Bill which was presented to the House on three occasions last century. Each time the aim was to put it through in one Session. There was no question of a carry-over motion. Each time the promoters sought concessions, in spite of considerable opposition from the port of Liverpool to the idea of Manchester having its own canal and port. In the end, a Bill was passed within one Session. If that was reasonable then, we should today examine carry-over motions carefully. In recent years the House has often approved such motions on the nod.

If we are to continue to allow private Bills, we must ensure that they are not controversial. There should be a reasonable opportunity for give and take between all the parties concerned so that a compromise can be arrived at. We should question whether the private Bill procedure is acceptable for controversial measures. If the House refuses to grant carry-over motions automatically, people will begin to consider whether we should establish a more effective procedure.

Last century there was no procedure for major planning inquiries. We now have such a procedure. We hold planning inquiries into major proposals. For example, an inquiry was held into the proposals for the development of Stansted, taking into account their implications for airports policy.

In this case, it would have been better if a planning application had been called in by the Minister and a major planning inquiry held into whether the proposed facilities were required. That would have given an opportunity for all the issues to be aired. An inspector would have taken evidence from all the interested groups, whether from individuals representing themselves or being represented legally. They would have had an opportunity to ask questions. The inspector would have listened to all the evidence and prepared a detailed report for the Secretary of State, who would have issued a decision, and if the House disagreed it would have been given an opportunity to debate the matter. In theory, there would have been an opportunity for the House to reach a different conclusion from that reached by the Secretary of State.

The promoters chose not to go through that procedure and they have denied many people the opportunity of making known their objections. The private Bill procedure is not widely understood. Perhaps that is because so many major decisions have been the result of a planning inquiry instead of the archaic private Bill procedure.

The promoters have to advertise their Bill in the locality which in their view is affected. That would be acceptable in this case if the objectors came only from the Felixstowe area. It is not easy to advertise the proposals in Southampton, for instance, or in all the other areas with ports which might lose out as a result of the Bill. The Bill might be well publicised locally, but it might not be advertised in other affected areas.

The small group of parliamentary agents and those who retain them scrutinise such Bills carefully. We are fortunate that groups such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds notice when such legislation is proposed and alert other environmental bodies. However, I suspect that the dock workers were not alerted to the proposals at a time when they might have submitted petitions. They found out about the Bill through publicity following the Second Reading. If a planning inquiry had taken place, they would have had more opportunity to find out about the Bill and to petition against it.

I tabled an amendment which was not selected. It attempted to allow new petitions to be submitted even at this late stage. I understand that the Committee will have a discretion to hear new arguments. I hope that if the Bill reaches the Committee hon. Members on the Committee will be generous and will allow people to put forward their views. The simple solution would be to throw out the Bill. The promoters might then consider a planning application rather than a private Bill. That would make it easier for the many people concerned about the legislation to petition. I accept that there is still a limited opportunity to petition because the Bill must go to the other place. However, there are problems with petitions.

The private Bill procedure does not ensure that all those entitled to know about it and its implications are so informed. Unless people petition at the beginning of the procedure, their opportunity to make representations is

very limited. The Bill has a Second Reading, which, by tradition, tends to last three hours. When this Bill was debated, many of those who wanted to argue against it were unable to do so and a closure motion was obtained at 10 o'clock.

We must carefully consider the procedures of the House. Last century, when large numbers of private Members' Bills were introduced, there may have been Members of Parliament with little to do who could afford the time to sit, almost like a judicial committee, for several weeks, hearing the evidence and weighing up the case of the promoters and the objections of the petitioners. Whenever I have spoken to people about serving on a private Bill Committee, I have found them concerned about what that involves. It is said that one of the powers of the Whips is to apply pressure on an individual Member to serve on a private Bill Committee as a punishment. It is a fairly onerous duty. The folklore of the House is that if a Member does not turn up to a Committee sitting he can be fined. Of course, that is not really the correct procedure. I understand that the Chairman of the Committee is entitled to report such a case to Mr. Speaker and that it is for the House to decide whether he should be fined. However, that is an indication that the House considers it a serious matter if an individual does not turn up at Committee sittings.

It may take several weeks to hear the evidence and weigh the arguments of the promoters and the petitioners. That is a great imposition on any Member of Parliament who has considerable constituency commitments and other commitments to debating public legislation.

One of the conditions for serving on a private Bill Committee is that an hon. Member should not have the remotest knowledge of or interest in the matter under debate, because if he had he might be partial.

Traditionally, there are four Members on a Committee. The implication is that they will try to arrive at a consensus. If two people vote in favour and two against, it is not easy to arrive at a conclusion. I know that under Standing Orders the Chairman has a casting vote, but there is a feeling that it would not be in the best interests for the Chairman to cast a vote and for the legislation to continue on the basis of a three-two vote.

The procedure is designed to produce a Bill where there is consensus, and where the promoters will have been able to meet the petitioners on various matters. If we are to achieve as full a debate by this procedure as we would through a public inquiry, we must place an onerous task on the four Committee Members to spend a long time in Committee listening to all the arguments.

With this Bill, there would be many environmental arguments—for example, the damage to the estuary and the fact that the wildfowl would lose a substantial part of their habitat. There could also be an argument about docks policy, and the fact that the Government do not actually have one. That would take a long time. There could be an argument about the implications of taking jobs away from Tilbury, Southampton or other ports and moving them to Felixstowe. That is a controversial issue.

There is, of course, the question of the fixed Channel link and the consequences for our ports. If Southampton were to lose a great deal of its trade to Europe, it would be tempted to compensate for that by competing for the trade that Felixstowe claims it is seeking through the proposed development. It would be easy for ships coming from many parts of the world to dock at Southampton and the containers then to go by road to Europe, using the fixed link. Such arguments could be developed at considerable length.

Which four Members would really be happy to sit on a Committee listening to evidence week after week, and then have to arrive at what is virtually a judicial decision? This is not the sort of procedure ideally suited to such a proposal. We should choose the alternative procedure of a public inquiry, which would involve people with expert knowledge and provide an opportunity for people to put their evidence in a more satisfactory manner.

When a private Bill has completed its Committee stage—assuming that the Committee believes that it should go forward—it returns to the House for another short debate on Report. The Report stage is not a suitable opportunity to air the basic principles. We have had unfortunate debates on narrow, procedural issues rather than on the meat of the Bill. The Bill then moves to Third Reading.

The scope for amendment is a problem. If there is a public inquiry, an inspector can make a series of recommendations, which can range over a wide area, and the Minister can either issue instructions that embody those recommendations or he can overturn them. However, the private Bill procedure provides that at all stages the scope of the Bill must be narrowed rather than extended. In theory, that is to protect the rights of the petitioners, because if the scope were extended someone might feel that had he known that it would be so extended he would have wished to petition.

If, in Committee, someone suggested that the Bill should have added to it a clause saying that if the fixed Channel link was built the Bill should be regarded as null and void, that would provide a simple precaution. When the Bill was first put forward there was little realistic possibility of a fixed Channel link, but it now appears that it is a more likely prospect. The conditions under which the House gave the Bill a Second Reading, and under which people prepared their petitions, would be altered if, when the Bill left the Committee, there was a clear Government decision on the fixed link. It would be reasonable to include an amendment to say that once construction of a fixed link had begun the powers in the Bill should lapse. Because of the parliamentary convention that legislation must become narrower and not be extended, I suspect that such an amendment would not find favour. Therefore, I believe there to be considerable problems with this system.

It would be far better to throw out the Bill and force the promoters to start again. That would not impose any major financial problem, because the Bill has made little progress. If they did not wish to start again, they could drop the Bill and use the alternative procedure of a planning application, which would ensure that, in due course, there would be a public inquiry. If they do not do that, there will be many problems for petitioners and would-be petitioners. It is a pity that the amendment has not been selected, because it would have enabled people to have their objections heard at the next stage.

I am increasingly dissatisfied with the private Bill procedure, in view of the time of hon. Members that it occupies. Indeed, I have heard hon. Members serving on such Committees say that if only the lawyers representing the various petitioners got on with their case more quickly they would be more sympathetic to the arguments. I have some sympathy with that view, but is it a satisfactory way

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to consider petitions? After all, from the objectors' point of view the arguments being adduced on their behalf are extremely important.

We should, therefore, defeat the proposed carry-over motion and oblige the promoters to return to a public inquiry. They would then have to debate whether the measure was necessary or whether we already had a surplus of port facilities for containers, meaning that it would not be in the national interest to have further capacity. I argue that it is more in the national interest to protect a major estuary that is a natural habitat for waders and wildfowl. Let us retain this area of outstanding natural beauty.

I remind the House that the attraction of an area such as this is its wilderness nature. Once a large container port is established, even if trees and other environmental characteristics are placed round it, the nature of a wide area is changed. I suspect—my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich could tell me—that this development will involve floodlighting at night, enabling 24-hour operation of the facility. That would extend the effects on the area even further. It would be unfortunate if we exchanged attractive mud flats for unused concrete hardstanding, especially if unused capacity exists elsewhere.

A proper public inquiry would also enable those concerned to examine the traffic effects of the development. If a fixed Channel link is built, we shall have to consider not only the traffic effects on East Anglia, but the implications for the Dartford tunnel and the road links down to the point at which the fixed link crosses the Channel. Those issues would be better debated at a public inquiry, where all the implications — including the possibility of a second Channel tunnel — could be considered.

At a public inquiry, full consideration could be given to the impact on competitor ports. For example, how far would the development draw trade away from Tilbury and Southampton, and how far would it affect ports to the north of Felixstowe all along the East Anglian coast right up to Humberside?

A public inquiry would have the opportunity to consider the likely future demand for containers. There is considerable evidence to show that many goods are now being transported in smaller volumes. As trade develops in, say, the coming 20 years, volumes may reduce, meaning that fewer containers will be required. Such arguments could be examined closely at a public inquiry. Another important aspect which an inquiry could consider is how far existing dock facilities are being utilised and what could be done to increase their use, at Felixstowe and elsewhere.

For those reasons, the House should be unwilling automatically to grant carry-over motions of this type. Bills should not be allowed to meander through Parliament, with the public tending to lose track of what is happening and having fewer opportunities to voice their feelings.

If we are to retain the private Bill procedure, it should exist only for Bills which have a wide measure of consensus. In those circumstances the promoters, knowing that they can achieve a wide measure of consensus, have a realistic opportunity of getting their measure through in one Session of Parliament.

Hon. Members should also examine carefully the environmental issues that are involved. We read in the press during the recess that the Government had suddenly become concerned about the "green" issue. The trouble with their concern is that all their actions point in the opposite direction. For example, we were told of the Government's great concern for the national parks. Then the Secretary of State for Transport announced during the recess not only that he intended to build a bypass through the national park at Okehampton, but that he envisaged getting the necessary legislation through almost on the nod. That does not demonstrate the Government's concern for the "green" issue.

We have seen the way in which the chairman of the Conservative party is willing to whip his Back-Benchers through the House to achieve legislation. I suspect that tonight, although a few hon. Members who are concerned with retaining the natural habitat have come to hear the debate, the payroll vote, the lobbying by Trinity college, which stands to make a great deal of money out of the development of this land, and various other financial interests, will result in Conservative Members voting for the motion. That will prove how little the Conservative party cares for the "green" issue. Its philosophy is that if, by destroying a bit of Britain, somebody can make a profit, that is all right.

In view of the remarks that I have made about the procedures of the House and the need for hon. Members more frequently to protect the habitat and the natural environment, I hope that the motion will be defeated.

8.38 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I regret the need for this debate. I felt that the issue could have been resolved at 7 o'clock without a debate or a Division. The discussion has been occupied largely by the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), both of whom spoke at some length. I shall respond more briefly to the points that they raised.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) was in his place earlier. Felixstowe is in his constituency and he has shown a close interest in the progress of the Bill. He has been a consistent supporter of it and it is a source of regret to him and to me that he is prevented by virtue of the high office that he holds from taking part in the debate tonight. However, there is no question but that he shares my view that Felixstowe and the prosperity and expansion of the town is of the greatest importance to our constituents, to East Anglia as a whole and to the people of many other constituencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) was the promoter of the Bill. He is presently elsewhere on what I believe to be parliamentary business. However, I understand that he hopes to reach the House before the conclusion of the debate.

I strongly support the carry-over motion and there seems to be no reason to withhold it. I regret the speech of the hon. Member for Ipswich, which was completely unworthy of him. His record inside and outside the House led me to expect rather better things from him.

It is noteworthy that no representatives of the Liberal party or the Social Democratic party are in their places. That is exactly what happened on Second Reading. Very few of their number voted in the Division when the Question was put on Second Reading despite their professed concern for unemployment, which is clearly one

of the issues at stake. They tell us also that they are concerned about "green" issues and infrastructure, but they are unable to muster any attendance for this debate. It should be said that after the debate had started a couple of Liberal Members entered the Chamber, occupied their places, spent a few minutes chatting to each other, looked around and apparently realised that they had come for a different debate. They have not remained with us. Perhaps their presence was some sort of hangover of enthusiasm from their conference.

I have heard nothing during the course of the debate which makes me believe that the Bill should not enjoy the facilities which I understand are normally made available to other private Bills at this stage in their parliamentary progress.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How many Bills have received the consent of the House to carry over into the next Session which have not proceeded into Committee in the Session in which they were introduced?

Mr. Yeo: I do not have the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question but I consider it to be a rather specious one. He knows as well as everyone else why the Bill did not proceed into Committee. We know that it would have done so in normal circumstances.

Second Reading took place on 13 May and the argument was won overwhelmingly by the Bill's supporters, as was the subsequent Division. It was an extremely good Second Reading debate and all the relevant issues were aired at length. Unfortunately, the arguments of the hon. Member for Ipswich on Second Reading were as specious as his so-called new arguments this evening. He referred to the existence of so-called new material which he explained he wished to introduce into the debate. It became increasingly apparent as his speech continued that he had no new material. That is not surprising because we have had ample opportunity to examine the issues previously. He repeated some of the same unsubstantiated assertions about navigational and environmental concerns, all of which have been fully explored in the past and answered fully by the Felixstowe company.

Mr. Bennett: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how he and the promoters envisage getting the undertakings on navigation rights worked into legislation?

Mr. Yeo: I believe that the hon. Gentleman has made a Committee point and not one that should be introduced into this debate. He is seeking to deal with a detailed matter and I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to detain the House on that sort of issue. We are here to debate whether the carry-over motion should be accepted by the House.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman has accused my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) of making unsubstantiated assertions. In fact, my hon. Friend has made no assertions in this context and his remarks certainly cannot be described as unsubstantiated. In August the Suffolk Coastal authority declared, together with another body, that the area of estuarial water with which we are concerned should be a site of special scientific interest. That is a fact of life and not an assertion. It is new evidence, which my hon. Friend has brought to light. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would moderate his language when attacking my hon. Friend and accusing him of making unsubstantiated assertions.

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman has raised a different point from the one advanced by his hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish. What he says about the site being designated as one of special scientific interest is true. I believe that the assurances that were given on Second Reading on behalf of the Felixstowe company were entirely adequate to satisfy those who are concerned about the possible environmental damage caused by the extension of the port. I believe that the environment will be enhanced by the programe of tree-planting and the other measures that the company is proposing to take to preserve the environmental advantages of the area.

The hon. Member for Ipswich spoke at some length about job creation, an issue that is central to the entire proposal. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was genuine in his concern for unemployment and I am surprised that he should now resort to contorted arguments to try to persuade himself that the Bill will not create many new jobs. There may be some variations in the estimates of the number of jobs that we shall gain, but I believe the estimate of 2,500 to be a reasonable working assumption of long-term job creation. However, there will be many indirect spin-offs which may spread into other constituencies as improved infrastructure encourages firms to locate their businesses in places that were previously not attractive.

The House and the voters of Ipswich and Suffolk as a whole should know that the hon. Member for Ipswich is so desperate in his opposition to this measure that he is resorting to obscure procedural devices in his untiring efforts to eliminate jobs from the areas surrounding his own constituency, including Felixstowe and the other nearby ports of Suffolk. The hon. Gentleman referred to the possibility of jobs being switched from one port to another and I accept that that is a possibility. Jobs could be transferred from one port to another if the Bill is not enacted. They could be transferred from British ports to continental ports, such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Those of us who support the Bill and the carry-over motion are anxious to prevent the destruction of job opportunities.

I am sad that the hon. Member for Ipswich and his hon. Friends should want to promote the export of jobs from Britain to the continent, but I am not surprised. It was the Labour Government, who were supported for almost two years by the absent members of the Liberal party, who introduced policies that were designed precisely to export jobs from Britain. The implementation of their policies achieved that unfortunate result with remarkable success.

The hon. Member for Ipswich talked about support for his arguments. He told us that he had received support from the Transport and General Workers Union nationally and at eastern regional level. He acknowledged that the group that knows more about the issue than anyone else —the members of the TGWU who work at Felixstowe, who are ably led by their chief shop steward, who has spent much time considering the merits of the proposal — is in support of the Bill. Once again we see the jackboot of national union leadership being used to grind the wishes of rank-and-file members on the spot into the dust. After all that has happened in the past two years, we might have thought that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends had reached some different conclusions. The conclusion could have been that local union membership opinion was worth listening to in proposals of this sort.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I accept that the hon. Gentleman can put the case for the Felixstowe docks. Surely he will accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) put the feelings of the rank and file Ipswich dockers.

Mr. Yeo: I merely said that I believed that the members of the TGWU at Felixstowe probably know a fair bit about this proposal and that their views are worth taking into account. I shall certainly take those views into account, even if Labour Members will not.

The fixed link was another item of so-called new material that the hon. Member for Ipswich introduced into the debate. I prefer to call the fixed link the Channel tunnel because fixed link seems to be an absurd bit of jargon. Even if half the construction will be a bridge there will still be a tunnel in the middle. Most people understand more clearly what one means when one refers to the Channel tunnel rather than the fixed link.

It appears from the speeches of the hon. Members for Ipswich and for Denton and Reddish that they will support the proposal for the fixed link. We have had an interesting preview of their attitude. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Ipswich consulted union members who work at Dover harbour, but that is just speculation. I believe that the question of the Channel tunnel is not of great relevance to this issue. It is for the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company to weigh up the commercial risks and the prospects for the proposed expansion. It is difficult to determine the effects of the Channel tunnel on the future of Felixstowe docks. We are speculating about developments that will not be fully operational for 10, 15 or 20 years. It is not for us to determine those effects; it is for the directors of the company to weigh up the commercial risks.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Opposition will drag up any reason or excuse, however irrelevant, to delay the passage of the Bill which is so badly needed to create jobs and make progress in East Anglia?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the point. We are subjected to many arguments of the most peripheral kind and of tangential relevance to this debate.

Reference has been made to the implications for road networks, traffic levels, and so on. I believe that those factors have been taken largely into account. The A45 is a road of high standard, which does not as yet carry an excessive amount of traffic. The House has already approved the A1/M1 link which will be of material value to Felixstowe, industries in the midlands and some constituencies in between. By the end of next year the Chelmsford bypass will be operating. This project is specially dear to the hearts of those people who, like me, frequently drive up and down the A12.

The environmental issue, which was raised earlier in this debate, was explored in great detail on Second Reading, and I cannot add much to that. I am satisfied that the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company will take action to protect the environment from unnecessary damage. I am personally concerned with this because my home is in a village called East Bergholt which is only a few miles from Felixstowe on the other side of the estuary. Many of my constituents have spoken to me about this proposal. Many have contacted the company and received constructive responses. The area is beautiful and it is important for us to ensure that it is not diminished as an attraction. The tourist business that we attract to East Anglia and Suffolk is important to us.

Some of the arguments that were introduced into the debate by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish were particularly specious. I acknowledge that he at least tried to address some constitutional aspects. He knows why the Bill has not been able to progress. He appeared to want to overturn a normal procedure. Perhaps if the hon. Gentleman had paid close attention to the hon. Member for Ipswich he would have heard his colleague acknowledge that in initiating the debate he was doing something out of the ordinary in parliamentary terms. It would not be right to conclude that this debate could be used to establish a new precedent for proceeding with private Members' Bills. There is no merit in the suggestion of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish that a public inquiry should be held. These issues have been adequately debated already. There will be further opportunities in Committee to debate some matters further, assuming that this carry-over motion is passed.

I shall refer to two items of new material that have become available since 13 May. The first is the change in the unemployment figures in Suffolk. New information leads me to believe even more strongly than I did on 13 May that the jobs that would be created if the dock were expanded as proposed are even more important now than they were five months ago. A second item of new material that has become available since 13 May is the improvement in British export prospects because of the movements in sterling. The pound is now much stronger against the dollar, resulting in lower costs for most of the raw materials imported to Britain by manufacturing industry. The pound is now slightly weaker against European currencies such as the deutschemark, making our exports of manufactured goods even more competitive. Those points reinforce the need for the House to approve this motion.

On 13 May the House gave the Bill a Second Reading by a substantial majority after a debate in which the Bill's supporters had the best of the argument. I firmly believe that the Bill should be carried over in the normal way, and I therefore urge the House to approve the motion.

8.57 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I wish to declare an interest in that I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union docks and waterways section. I do not believe that it would be right to carry over this Bill, and my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has given many reasons for that. The House should be aware of the wide-ranging implications that carrying over the Bill would have. My hon. Friend has put the constitutional points. The House has failed to recognise that the Bill has wider ramifications than those given consideration on Second Reading.

One of the things that I learnt in the port transport industry was that there is no way of predicting the outcome on the river of a construction in a tidal estuary. Despite what has been said by Conservative Members, I have seen no evidence of that. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) mentioned on Second Reading how much hydrographical research had been done into the feasibility of the extension of the port. He was not challenged when he said that he had heard little about any feasibility studies carried out by the port authority.

There were at least two years', if not more, research carried out on tidal and current effects, siltation and other matters that would affect the meandering of the tidal estuary as a result of the construction of the new dock at Liverpool. There is no way in which we can predict the outcome of such a construction.

There is no evidence of any in-depth examination at Felixstowe. That leads people to wonder whether the port authority is throwing itself in at the deep end with the extension of the port at Felixstowe.

I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich has been arguing the case merely on behalf of his constituents. In this place it is right for hon. Members to argue a case for their constituency and in the interests of their constituents. He has pointed out that the proposal would affect not only the port immediately adjacent to Felixstowe but other United Kingdom ports. We have already had massive evidence of the effects changes in the pattern of the port transport industry have had on regional economies especially in the north, north-west and Scotland. We have seen changes that have caused once major ports such as Liverpool, Manchester and the other northern ports to play a minor role. We should all recognise that changes in the port transport industry cannot be seen in isolation. We should not examine one port only and make a case for the extension of that port, because the extension can only be to the detriment of other ports and regions.

I do not believe that sufficient information about the consequences of the proposed change on other ports and regional economies has been given to the House. The Government have failed completely to recognise that the decline that is taking place in some parts of the country is related in many instances to the decline in the port industries.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the demise in some of the ports to which he has referred is due largely to bad management practices, bad labour relations, high labour costs and a low turnover in those ports? We wish our ports to achieve the higher efficiency, lower handling costs and greater efficiency in the use of manpower that is evident in Felixstowe at the moment and in several of our other ports, and which has resulted in the changes he has outlined.

Mr. Loyden: I do not accept that. Prosperity in this country was due largely to the major ports. The nation's wealth was based upon ports such as Liverpool, Manchester, the north-eastern ports, Southampton, Bristol and others. It is nonsense to argue that they were not successful in the past.

We accept that technological change and different methods of handling cargo need changes in the composition and layout of ports. At the same time, we have been faced with the movement away from some regions and into others. That has been to the detriment of some ports and regions. I do not want to block prospects for more work in Felixstowe, but I do not wish to see an expansion of work in Felixstowe at the expense of another part of the country. We are not talking about a real increase in jobs. We are talking about the movement of work from one part of the country to another.

One of the important points missed on Second Reading, which gives grounds for at least an inquiry into Felixstowe, is the fact that the Government have continued to give benefits to non-scheme ports as a way of allowing scheme ports to wither on the vine. That has been the intention of this Government from the beginning and that is why they support the expansion of the non-scheme ports. That will be done because the Government want to see an end to the National Dock Labour Board scheme and that can be done by extending the non-scheme ports at the expense of the scheme ports. That has clearly been the intention of the Government from the beginning and has wider implications for the whole of the port transport industry and on any planning that may take place in future. There is no evidence that that is taking place at the moment. The Government saw fit to remove the only constraints we had upon planning for the port transport industry when they amended the Harbours Act.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that if the result of the Bill passing in the next Session is an increase in exports and therefore an increase in national wealth, then, as surely as night follows day, this will lead to an overall increase in jobs for this country and for East Anglia in particular? That must be good not only for our region but for the nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Hon. Members are beginning to stray a bit. We are dealing with the carry-over motion and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address his remarks to that.

Mr. Loyden: The intervention was moving away from the point. The point that I am making is that the implications of this Bill are wide-reaching and should not be carried over. I am trying to develop the argument about the wider implications. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich argued the case about the adjacent ports, but it is not only the adjacent ports that are affected because other ports in the United Kingdom will be affected and the whole question of any comprehensive plan about the port transport industry will be directly affected by the development not only of Felixstowe, but of the others which will be in the pipeline once this Bill goes through.

There are wide ramifications for the port transport industry and they have been dealt with by my hon. Friends in some detail. The House must recognise the case for the environment. That case has been fully put by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich and it is not something that is confined to those people immediately adjacent to the environment that can be despoiled by this development. That piece of environment belongs to us all and we have seen the growing interest by the people in their environment, particularly when they see more and more of it being destroyed.

We are now conscious of the fact that we have to do all we can to preserve those bits of environment that still remain intact, areas which are things of beauty and places where people can take their leisure. That is not a matter for the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Board to consider. It is a matter that affects people throughout the country, who are concerned about the future of their environment. This is proven by the fact that environmentalists are having a greater say in the political direction in which Governments are going.

This Bill does not confine itself to the effects it will have either on the port industry in that area or the environment. This Bill will have a direct effect upon the port transport industry in the widest possible sense. In the post-war period I have seen in the port of Liverpool a

[Mr. Loyden]

decline which was partly due to technological change or to the changing pattern in the method of cargo handling. It was mainly due to the development and operation of non-scheme ports and the effect that our entry into the European Community had on those ports. In that sense the port was central to the economy of that area and it is a matter of grave importance to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, which is the port authority, when it sees the possibility of its trade being further taken away by the development of ports on the south coast, particularly non-scheme ports.

The Bill should not be carried over. There should be a much closer examination of all the implications that would flow from the passing of the Bill. It would open the floodgates for further applications, because the restrictions would have been lifted and not only northern ports but those on the south-west coast and others would be affected.

The implications are wide and the House would do well to think carefully about the Bill. It would be an abuse of our procedures if the measure were carried over. It will have serious implications for the industry and the country generally and could deal a death blow to ports such as Liverpool. I ask my hon. Friends to oppose the carry-over motion.

9.10 pm

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Before explaining why I have grave reservations about the motion, I should tell the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) that I did not vote for the Second Reading of the Bill. I abstained because I felt that this was a Bill to promote free and fair competition, but on the basis of what has happened since Second Reading I am worried about whether it really is free and fair competition.

The motion would prevent any new petitioners arguing against the Bill. That would be a grave step. Since Second Reading, a number of people have concluded that they should have petitioned against the Bill. If the Bill had got through in this Session, they could not have complained — they would have missed their opportunity — but it would be unusual for the House to give leave to promoters of a private Bill to have it carried over to the next Session, particularly when there has been no intervening general election and when the Bill has not even been considered in Committee.

This is undoubtedly a controversial Bill. It is not urgent, and major developments in the British docks industry since Second Reading have implications for the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) said on Second Reading that the Bill was necessary because many shipowners wished to use east coast ports and some had refused to use ports such as Southampton because of their disastrous industrial relations record.

Since then, Southampton has demonstrated that it has put its house in order. Many of the stop stewards who have helped to bring about the changes there are in the Public Gallery for this debate. Unit costs at Southampton have been reduced substantially — from about £110 per container to about £70. At that figure, the port was attracting business away from Felixstowe. The evidence is that Felixstowe is having great difficulty in finding customers for its new Trinity terminal.

Paragraph 2 of the original statement by the promoters in support of the Bill said:

"existing facilities in Felixstowe are barely sufficient to meet the current needs of port users and by mid-1986 the Port of Felixstowe will have completed its growth within its present limits. Further expansion will only be possible after that year if the Bill is enacted."

However, information provided for me today by shop stewards from Southampton shows that the situation in Felixstowe is so desperate that, far from existing users saying that there is insufficient capacity, the port is short of users and is prepared to approach Trio and Saecs, the two main users that keep Southampton going. The port of Felixstowe has come to those two customers and is threatening to undercut the prices substantially. I believe that a figure of something like £50 per container has recently been mentioned.

There is no way in which any large container port in Europe can operate on that sort of basis, and there is certainly no way in which any container port in this country can do so if it is playing fair. My fear is that the port of Felixstowe is trying to create a private monopoly for itself. On the basis of the information that I have been given, what is contained in paragraph 2 of the promoters' statement—whether it was true at the time, I would not like to judge, but certainly on the basis of recent evidence — it needs to be closely examined. The opportunity should be given for more people to come forward to petition against the Bill, to try to examine that allegation further.

The port of Southampton is now viable, but if it loses the business that Felixstowe now threatens to take from it there will effectively be only one major container port in this country. In my submission, that would be in neither the national interest nor the local, particularly in Southampton. It is pretty galling when a group of people who have made the sort of sacrifices that many of my constituents in Southampton have made find that they are threatened in the way that now seems likely.

The attitude of the Transport and General Workers Union on this is not one that I wholly endorse because, on the one hand, the local TGWU in Felixstowe is saying that it is heartily in favour of this whilst, on the other, some members of the TGWU national committee, as I understand it, are threatening a national dock strike in the event of this Bill getting on to the statute book. That is grossly reprehensible. I hope that no one working in Southampton would have anything to do with it.

At the same time, however, national members of the TGWU and the Labour party itself are committed to a policy of imposing sanctions against South Africa at a stroke. If such sanctions were brought in it would destroy the port of Southampton — the people in the Public Gallery today know that—because it would take away one third of the container traffic going through Southampton at the moment. So we do not want to have too much humbug about this.

I hope that, in the light of the new developments that have taken place since the Second Reading, the House will consider very carefully whether it would be right to allow this Bill to be carried over to the next Session and whether it would not be much fairer for all concerned for it to have to start again then.

9.19 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): The hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) accused my hon. Friend the

Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) of making unsubstantiated assertions. I would like to level the same charge at the hon. Member for Suffolk, South. It is a pity that he is no longer in place to hear it. The reason why my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich continues to represent that splendid constituency is that he assiduously defends his constituents' interests. That is why they continue to support him no matter what adversity may be affecting the Labour party nationally at the time. My hon. Friend was absolutely justified in saying what he did in relation to what is, after all, substantial new evidence that has come to light since we debated this matter on 13 May this year.

Your predecessor in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, indicated that all Members who took part in this debate this evening—and rightly so—must confine their remarks to the issues which are currently on the Order Paper. None of us has any quarrel with that at all. Our difficulty, however, is that this is a rather unusual situation. It is certainly unusual for many of my hon. Friends, and I notice that the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) found a little difficulty in staying in order when trying to say the things that he wished to say. I understand the position of the Chair. If, during my brief contribution, I wander outside the terms of reference of the debate, it will be because I find it somewhat difficult to address my remarks to the narrow proposal before us.

The parliamentary and constitutional issue was best spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) when he said that if the House prevented the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company from carrying this private Bill through this evening's procedures into the next Session of Parliament, in a sense that would be offending the traditions of the House of Commons. I believe that, too, for several reasons, some of which I shall attempt to adduce.

It is a thoroughly bad practice for anybody to bring a private Bill to the House of Commons that fundamentally —I use the word constructively—disturbs the national pattern of ports policy. The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) has belatedly gone down the road to Damascus with regard to ports policy. There are two new reasons for not preventing the Bill going further, and that is the conversion of the hon. Members for Itchen and Test who have been lobbied heavily by their constituents. I should say in fairness to them that I made on Second Reading exactly the same points that they both made tonight. I am sorry that they could not join me in the Lobby when we debated that on 13 May.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) said that one of the issues that has come to light since Second Reading is the decision by the Nature Conservancy Council and Suffolk Coastal county council to designate the area of the estuary of the Orwell a site of special scientific interest, notified under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. If a county council and a reputable body have decided so to notify that area of estuarial water as an SSSI under the Act, I should have thought that the House of Commons would take serious cognisance of the fact. That is one of the substantial reasons whey we are taking our present position.

On Second Reading, although petitions were laid by many conservation bodies, that position had not been officially taken by the county council and the NCC. As it has been ratified by those bodies after Second Reading, it is important to outline some of the reasons why that was done. Many Conservative Members have referred to it.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) graced us with his presence rather late in the debate. No doubt he will make his excuses if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He cannot ignore the substantial body of opinion in his own area, together with the fears of the national bodies concerned with the conservation of wildlife, about the dangers to that unique habitat in East Anglia of the extension of Felixstowe. I need not rehearse all the arguments. They are clear and concise. I have no doubt that everybody concerned with the issue and the debate will have received the contents of the petition of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which refers to the unique habitat surrounding the Felixstowe area, which will be irreparably damaged if the Bill proceeds. The House should not consider proceeding further without taking proper cognisance of what that august body has said.

If that claim by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is not enough, the House has a duty and responsibility in the national interest. On Second Reading, I drew the Minister's attention at some length to the way in which the Bill would undermine the very precarious national balance in our ports system today. If the Bill is to be allowed to proceed into the next Session of Parliament, the House would have done far better today to say that it should be taken away and submitted to the planning application procedure just as the proposal to extend Stansted airport was submitted to the planning application procedure and to a public inquiry. I believe that developing Felixstowe as proposed will have the same effect on our ports as the Stansted extension will have on our airports and that this is, therefore, a matter of great national interest.

Neither the Minister nor anyone else in the Chamber today has seriously and intellectually challenged the evidence to which I drew attention on 30 May. I refer to the evidence submitted by Dr. Gilman of the marine transport department of Liverpool university. Dr. Gilman has considered the matter very seriously and produced an academic paper on the subject. He has considered the levels of trade and the volume of imports and exports. The hon. Member for Suffolk, South shakes his head, but even he, in his somewhat spurious five-minute contribution today, did not challenge the intellectual basis of the argument that I made on Second Reading, and that is the kernel of our argument today.

Fresh evidence has now emerged in support of the case that we made about total tonnage movable in the United Kingdom. Either it can all be moved through Felixstowe or it can be moved through various other ports in the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Suffolk, South and the Minister, however, must address themselves to the fact that there is already enormous overcapacity. If the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill proceeds into the next Session of Parliament without a wide-ranging planning investigation and without a public inquiry, the five berths at Felixstowe will provide 3·5 million tonnes additional cargo capacity for a system which requires just over 9 million tonnes in total and is already adequately provided for. All the academic research on cargo-handling trends, ro-ro services and containerisation shows that we are handling less cargo than in 1977 and 1979. Indeed, we are probably handling about as much as we did at the start of the container revolution in 1967, so the current handling capacity of our ports requires no additional provision at Felixstowe.

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman accused me of not responding to his point, but it has not been made in this debate by either the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) or the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden). The point was adequately answered on Second Reading by many Conservative speakers, and it was voted on. The hon. Gentleman is now dredging up the Second Reading debate again, and that has nothing to do with this motion. The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company is the best body to decide on the commercial prospects for an expansion of Felixstowe. If it makes a mistake, it will make a loss. No taxpayers' money is involved in the scheme, and I have no doubt that the company has made a careful judgment about the prospect of future tonnage. On its past record, the company's judgment seems to be remarkably good.

Mr. Stott: That is so, and if the hon. Gentleman had read or heard what I said on Second Reading he would know that I paid tribute to the way in which the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company had made that port a success —there is no doubt about that. However, one cannot simply approve a project that, in the face of all the evidence available to us both on Second Reading and since then, will have a dramatic effect on the national interest of our ports.

Why does the hon. Member for Suffolk, South think that the hon. Members for Itchen and for Test are now getting cold feet about the proposition? They know the damage that this extension would cause to their ports, as my hon. Friends the Members for Ipswich and Garston know how it would affect the ports in their constituencies.

I accept that the hon. Member for Suffolk, South is ploughing his constituency furrow when he defends the Bill. However, I cannot agree that the Bill would be in the national interest, and therefore——

Mr. Yeo *rose*——

Mr. Stott: I must finish because the Minister must have time to wind up the debate.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, I believe that there is a constitutional case against the Bill continuing into the next Session. There are also good sound, practical reasons.

I do not commit my party one way or the other. It is essential that we bear a certain factor in mind. The Government have proceeded at a great pace to try to get a resolution of the fixed link. They have encouraged it and set up an organisation that will evaluate the projects submitted to the Secretary of State. Whether or not we agree with the fixed link across the Channel does not affect the fact that if it were to come about it would have profound effects on our port strategy for the south and east coasts of the United Kingdom.

I have no doubt that the Minister has been to visit Dover, as I did early this year. Some 11,000 people are employed in that port, which moves more in tonnage and value than does Felixstowe. If there is to be at some stage a fixed link across the Channel, it will have a profound effect on our ports policy, and on what the Bill is proposing to do.

Like the hon. Member for Test, I believe that there should be a proper national ports policy. We should not proceed through piecemeal legislation such as this, nor should we do something that we should all regret.

9.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I shall reply briefly to the debate, because this is a procedural motion. I shall simply advise the House of the Government's attitude.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) sought to draw me on the net effect of these proposals on the extension of employment in the ports industry. On another occasion I should be happy to debate the merits of allowing the growth of port capacity where customers want it versus the merits of refusing that development and forcing customers to use existing capacity elsewhere. Tonight I must resist that temptation. I am sure that the hon. Member for Ipswich will understand why. Likewise, I shall not follow the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) in his forecast of the capacity required in United Kingdom ports; nor shall I follow his speculation about a Channel fixed link and its possible effects.

The hon. Member for Ipswich asked me about the possibility of legislative backing for the guarantees promised by Felixstowe. My Department takes the view that parts of the harbour revision order are ultra vires as regards guarantees for Ipswich traffic. It is not for me to speculate at this stage about what legislative alternatives may be available to provide the port of Ipswich with the guarantees that it seeks. It is for the parties concerned— Ipswich, Harwich and Felixstowe — to sort out a legislative solution among themselves.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If the House did not pass the carry-over motion today and the promoters had to introduce a new Bill, it would then be possible for them to solve the vires problem.

Mr. Mitchell: As I was trying to say to the House, it is entirely a matter for the parties to decide the way in which they wish to proceed.

To return to the Government's view, I understand that it is not infrequent for there to be a carry-over motion of this kind. From the remarks that I made on Second Reading, the House will be aware that the Government's stand is neutral in relation to the Bill, as is customary in such circumstances. I recommended to the House that the Bill should be given a Second Reading and allowed to proceed in the usual way to Committee where its provisions could be considered in detail. It is consistent with that approach that the Government therefore support the carry-over motion. The case for supporting the motion has been put eloquently by a number of my hon. Friends.

This is an important private Bill, although a controversial one. The House affirmed the principle of the Bill, albeit conditionally, on Second Reading and subject to proof of allegations of fact before the Committee. If the motion is carried, the House will have an opportunity to consider the arguments for and against the Bill on the basis of the current proposals before it in Committee and at later stages. It is perhaps fair to say that it is no fault of the promoters that the Bill has not made more rapid progress in this Session, due to wholly unlooked for problems that arose in connection with the proposed chairmanship of the Committee that was appointed to examine the Bill.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that if the promoters had made more of an attempt to meet my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) and other objectors, particularly the petitioners, and that if they

had been able to meet some of the points made in the petitions and got those petitions withdrawn, much more rapid progress could have been made?

Mr. Mitchell: Progress could hardly have been made without the Bill going into Committee. The motion before the House would allow exactly that. It would enable the Committee to consider whether proper arrangements had been made to meet the points that have been raised by hon. Members speaking on behalf of, for example, the port of Ipswich, which clearly is very much involved in the consequences of the proposed measure. The view of the Government is that it would be unfortunate if the House were not to agree to the motion. Therefore, I urge the House to allow the Bill to be carried over in the usual way and to agree to the motion.

9.39 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): First, I apologise to the House for not being here during the very early stages of the debate. I had to attend an important conference in Newcastle which discussed, interestingly enough, the marine environment. Therefore, it is apposite that I should participate in this debate, albeit on the motion in front of the House, in terms of the marine environment. It is also apposite that I should represent, with my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), one of the major ports in this country, which is on the Tyne. I do not speak as a constituency Member or in defence of the Tyne port. I do not need to do so.

The Bill should not be carried over into the next Session. Many developments affecting the Bill have occurred since we had our wide-ranging Second Reading debate on 13 May. Sufficient new evidence and information of national import has been obtained since then to merit my submission. The Bill may appear to be an innocuous, local measure, but it has wide-ranging implications not only for the Felixstowe area but for places such as Southampton and Liverpool.

The changes in economic factors since we discussed the Bill on 13 May were skilfully argued by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). He described the nuances in the changes in the economic arguments, especially in relation to jobs. The hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) used the same employment statistics to support his case. The statistics show a worsening economic position. That is why I think that we should refuse to allow a carry-over period.

We are conscious not only of the Bill's economic and conservation implications but of its effect on the leisure industry. Since the Second Reading further aspects have emerged. We were all aware of the navigational problems. We knew that if the river were deepened and the wharfs built the channel would be restricted and that the pleasure boats would have to use the same routes as merchant ships. In addition to that, new marinas are being developed at Dovercourt, Harwich and Shotley, which will have an effect on navigational rights on the river. The Minister made it clear that navigational disputes between Ipswich and Felixstowe are ultra vires and must be settled elsewhere.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The Minister failed to answer my question. I argued that if we had a new Bill it would be possible to include such considerations in that new Bill. I understand that since the promoters gave notice in their original proposals that they would include that aspect in the Bill there would be no difficulty. If the promoters took the Bill away and started again they could solve the problem from the start and it would be tied up in legislation instead of being left in such an airy-fairy way that the guarantees sought by Ipswich cannot be given.

Dr. Clark My hon. Friend, perhaps, deploys my argument more skilfully than I can. That is the very thrust of the point I intended to make.

In addition to having a responsibility to the good citizens of Felixstowe, the House has a responsibility to the people of Ipswich. The problem of navigational rights is tricky, as I well know from my experience on the Clyde and from our debates on the Norfolk Broads. Indeed, we may have to deal with a private Bill from the Norfolk Broads. Navigational rights are common rights and cannot be bartered over a table. Those rights must be negotiated in this Chamber alone.

I use the Minister's argument to support the point that the Bill should not be carried over. If the promoters feel it proper and right to extend the port, they should return to the House with a new Bill. I believe that to be the logic of the Minister's case.

Mr. Stott: My hon. Friend makes a salient point, and I should have touched on it in my contribution. I draw his attention to column 102 of *Hansard* of 13 May, when I read into the record a letter from Captain Wiechmann, master of the Cast Salmon—a ship that travels up and down the Orwell river regularly. He expressed concern that

"if the proposed extension of the Felixstowe quays takes place into the narrower section of the River Orwell, then the reduced channel will effectively prevent any possibility of passing whilst vessels are berthing or unberthing at the new quays."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1985; Vol. 79, c. 102.]

That seagoing master regularly uses the river. He has committed his views on paper in a letter to his employers.

Would it not be better for the Bill to be withdrawn so that we could obtain the views of the pilots, the master mariners and others who use the river about the Felixstowe proposals?

Dr. Clark: I concur with my hon. Friend. I have a report of his speech in front of me now. He makes a salient point. The Minister may argue that the Bill should be allowed to go to Committee, but that does not help the House. As we all know, it is Second Reading that provides an opportunity for a wide-ranging debate.

The rules of the House will not easily allow the introduction of new information. Therefore, we should start again with a wide-ranging debate on the merits of the case. We are this evening discussing a narrow motion on whether the Bill should be carried over.

The hon. Member for Suffolk, South made an interesting point when he said that the proposal did not affect the environment and then referred to the planting of trees. The House might wish to know that it is reported that the port of Felixstowe is prepared to plant 500,000 trees to screen the development. It thinks that that planting would make the scheme environmentally attractive. However, if it takes 500,000 trees to make the scheme environmentally attractive, there must be something environmentally unsound in the first place.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is it intended to plant broadleaved trees or conifers? Many people have been alarmed about the environmental impact of conifers.

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point to which I shall come when I deploy the next stage of my argument.

The hon. Member for Suffolk, South spoke about the development affecting not the environment but the habitat. The whole point about that habitat, which has been declared an SSSI, is that it is not forest but mud flats. That is where birds such as redshanks, turnstones and grey and ringed plovers go. They go there not because there are trees there but because there are not trees there. That is the especial value of the site. That is why that area, rather than, say, the Kielder forest, was declared an SSSI. Put 500,000 trees there and there would be no point in designating it an SSSI. Fleet forest, Galloway, Kielder forest or the New Forest would serve the purpose.

That brings me to the whole question of the new information in relation to the SSSI. I remind hon. Members again that the Second Reading took place on 13 May last. The Nature Conservancy Council, the body responsible for advising the Government and the nation on matters pertaining to the natural sciences and the environment, notified Suffolk county council, the owners, on 20 August that the area should be designated a site of special scientific interest.

Following the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, which received the Royal Assent in June and became effective on 26 August, that site became protected. That is a new development of which this House did not have knowledge when the issue was discussed on 13 May.

The whole scientific reason for that designation was not because there were 500,000 trees in the area but, rather, because there were not 500,000 trees there. That designation was not lightly given. Under the Ramsar convention, the area has been designated an EEC special protection area. It is regarded as an area of outstanding international quality. It is of immense value to wildfowl, waders and other birds.

It is our job in Parliament to deliberate on these matters as a whole, and Back Benchers, especially on the Opposition Benches, depend greatly on information given to us by outside bodies. Reference has been made to the RSPB. I have no doubt that the Transport and General Workers Union gave advice, for example, to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich. We have a responsibility to listen to the arguments advanced by outside bodies, especially those that Parliament has set up to advise hon. Members.

In 1973 we established the Nature Conservancy Council to advise us on matters pertaining to the natural sciences. When we debated this issue on 13 May, we did not have the benefit of that council's advice. Its advice was not made public—I do not know whether it was given to the Minister beforehand—until 24 May 1985. Again, that is a pertinent piece of new information.

The council's attitude to the proposal of the Felixstowe company is outlined in considerable detail and with great clarity in four pages. It is the first time that we have been able to discuss the council's analysis. That is a reason why we should start again and have another Second Reading if we so wish. The council has analysed the likely effect of the Bill's enactment on the bird population and the natural habitat. It states that it would be impossible to recreate the present habitat and adds:

"In view of the foregoing, the Nature Conservancy Council must advise that the passage of this Bill would lead to serious damage to nature conservation interests and the national and international status of the Orwell Estuary. Therefore, the Nature Conservancy Council consider that the interests of nature conservation would be best served if the Bill is not enacted."

That was made public on 24 May.

On two national dimensions—the establishment of the SSSI and the evidence of the NCC—it is clear that we should not allow the Bill to go forward. If we allow it to proceed, we shall have only a truncated debate on an issue which has major national ramifications.

The issue is not as simple as that. Since the debate of 13 May other evidence has become available about the establishment of the area of outstanding natural beauty. The area in question was one of the original 36 AONBs which various Governments of both political complexions have seen fit to establish. It is a great pity that the present Government do not have the determination to establish the north Pennine as an AONB without sheltering behind a public inquiry. When they designated the area that we are discussing there was no need for a public inquiry. The Government were so sure that it was an area of outstanding natural beauty that they felt that there was no need to hide behind an inspector. They were able on their own judgment and on the merits of the case to establish the area as one of outstanding natural beauty because of the quality of the land.

It is interesting to consider the importance of an area of outstanding natural beauty. I recommend all Members to read an article that appeared in the *County Council Gazette* of September 1985 by Mr. Edwin Barritt, the county planning officer of Suffolk. In that article he argues fairly and outlines the conflict between the environment and jobs. He addresses himself to whether new jobs will be created and makes two pertinent points that are relevant to the motion. He quotes the Secretary of State for the Environment, and it is to be noted that no Minister from the Department is on the Government Front Bench this evening. It appears that in 1982 the then Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"It would be inconsistent with the aims of designation"—

that is, designation as an AONB—

"to permit the siting of major industrial and commercial developments in areas of outstanding natural beauty. Only proven national interest and lack of alternative sites can justify"—

Mr. Yeo *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question now be put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 123, Noes 52.

Division No. 292] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Amess, David	Browne, John
Ancram, Michael	Buck, Sir Antony
Aspinwall, Jack	Burt, Alistair
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Butcher, John
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Cash, William
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Batiste, Spencer	Chapman, Sydney
Beggs, Roy	Colvin, Michael
Best, Keith	Coombs, Simon
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cope, John
Blackburn, John	Couchman, James
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bottomley, Peter	Dorrell, Stephen
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Dover, Den
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Durant, Tony
Brooke, Hon Peter	Emery, Sir Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Fallon, Michael

Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Eldon Griffiths and
Mr. Tim Yeo.

NOES

Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Crowther, Stan
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hill, James
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Loyden, Edward
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, M.
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Weetch and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 122, Noes 53.

Division No. 293] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Eldon Griffiths and
Mr. Tim Yeo.

NOES

Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Crowther, Stan
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John

Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hill, James
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, M.
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allen
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Weetch and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That the promoters of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House.

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed).

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session.

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business.

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against bill)" were omitted.

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Housing Bill [*Lords*], the Housing Associations Bill [*Lords*], the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill [*Lords*], the Landlord and Tenant Bill [*Lords*] and the Weights and Measures Bill [*Lords*], may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Solicitor-General.]*

Housing Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

10.20 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if I deal with the Housing Bill and the other three associated Bills on housing — that is, the Housing Associations Bill [*Lords*], the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill [*Lords*] and the Landlord and Tenant Bill [*Lords*]—together.

I am sure that the House would wish me to express its thanks, its appreciation and its admiration to those primarily responsible for the completion of this enormous task. These four Bills will consolidate an area of law last consolidated some 28 years ago, since when there have been 17 further Housing Acts and unnumbered other amendments. The Table of Derivations in the Housing Bill alone occupies 47 pages. The four Bills together comprise 778 clauses and 36 schedules.

The subject matter is diverse. The draftsman identified 16 distinct topics within the scope of the existing legislation. Sixteen separate Bills would not have been a practical proposition and the present format was, therefore, chosen. The Housing Bill contains the majority of the provisions within the scope of the consolidation, but within that the draftsman has arranged the parts in such a way that the seeker after enlightenment can approach each part as if it were a self-contained unit.

Two topics were, however, sufficiently distinct to merit separate Bills. The first is the Housing Associations Bill dealing with a clearly identifiable sub-division of the law on housing. It also has a different territorial application. The Housing Bill extends to England and Wales only whereas the Housing Associations Bill extends to Scotland as well.

Secondly, there is the Landlord and Tenant Bill. The last of the four Bills is the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill, which deals with technical matters arising from the three substantive Bills, such as repeals, consequential amendments and transitional matters. It is more convenient, in a consolidation exercise of this size, to gather them together in this way.

There are two other matters relating to the exercise that I should mention. First, there was no pre-consolidation tidying-up Bill, so these Bills merely re-enact the law as it stands. However, the Law Commission, for the purpose of a satisfactory consolidation, made a number of recommendations for amendments that would remove technical anomalies and inconsistencies, and for the repeal of a number of provisions of, doubtful use. Those amendments have been incorporated. Secondly, the number of Acts to be consolidated and the diverse nature of the subject matter have led the draftsmen to recast the provisions in a more modern and consistent style. In particular, the provisions have been divided up as far as possible into short sections and short subsections, and subparagraphs have been almost entirely dispensed with. I believe that that style is welcome and admirable.

As the House knows, consolidation exercises involve a great amount of detailed and painstaking work. We are particularly fortunate that the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills undertakes a careful and detailed scrutiny of the proposals to ensure that, subject to any

amendments that it may suggest, the consolidation Bills meet the necessary requirements. In the light of its report, we were able to consider them with much greater confidence.

Therefore, I should like to thank the committee on behalf of the House for its endeavours on this and other consolidation Bills that the House has considered during the Session. I should also like to thank the Law Commission and Parliamentary Counsel for their efforts and congratulate them on their epic achievement in the preparation of the Bills. It is a superlative piece of consolidation, to use the words of a distinguished Law Lord in another place. It is essential that the law should be accessible and intelligible. This consolidation represents a significant contribution to both these objectives. I commend the Bills to the House.

10.27 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): As I have done on previous occasions, I should like to state on behalf of the Opposition our thanks to the Joint Committee for the painstaking work that it does, and our support for that work. It is right that the laws of our country should be set out in as clear and comprehensive a form as possible. It is the task of the Joint Committee to draw together existing legislation in the same area and present the fruits of its labour to Parliament for approval.

Approval is usually forthcoming without a great deal of further debate. There are two obvious reasons for that. The first is that the Joint Committee is dealing with the existing law of the land and not considering controversial new legislation. The second reason why Parliament does not normally subject consolidated legislation to further vigorous scrutiny is that both Houses are represented on the Committee, the Opposition as well as the Government. Indeed, the major advantage of such a Committee is that it scrutinises, on behalf of Parliament, proposals for consolidation and the form that it should take. That relieves Parliament of the necessity of considering consolidation measures in some other way. In short, we rely upon the work of the Committee.

In as far as the Bills now before us represent the recommendations of the Joint Committee, the Opposition are willing to see those recommendations pass into legislation, satisfied that in form and substance they have been subjected to proper scrutiny. However, that is not all that we are being asked to do. The Government have now said that they wish to table a substantial number of amendments to these complex Acts, which are supposed to represent the final views of the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills before being presented to the House. It is reasonable to ask what scrutiny the new amendments will receive before being enacted as legislation.

I received a pile of papers 4½ in thick from the Solicitor-General's office for my consideration today before tonight's debate. Until this afternoon there had been no agreement through the usual channels about the proposed amendments to the legislation. The failure properly to consult the Opposition over what should be non-controversial legislation is completely out of keeping with the spirit in which those matters are usually dealt with. It pushes the rights not just of the parliamentary Opposition but of Parliament itself to one side. That is all the more irksome to me in that I telephoned the Solicitor-General in mid-September to clarify the position and received a very pleasant letter dated 24 September stating in relation to the Bills now under discussion:

"The draftsman is endeavouring to prepare the amendments and the accompanying notes by the beginning of October and I hope, therefore, that I will be able to send them on to you in the near future."

Yet the information was dumped on me today, accompanied by a letter dated 15 October saying:

"Insofar as the proposed amendments to the various Housing Consolidation Bills are concerned, these have not yet been finally settled. It will be some time before they are finalised but, in view of their number, I thought you would appreciate having those already prepared at this stage, albeit subject to possible change."

As well as providing the information only hours before the debate, therefore, the Solicitor-General is saying that there is more to come and that what we now have may change. How much confidence can the House be expected to have in a rolling programme of amendments which we are to be asked to pass en masse after a few brief but no doubt reassuring remarks from the Solicitor-General? We shall be discussing more than 100 amendments to four complex Bills. The full list of enclosures that I received today reads as follows:

"Housing Bill, Housing Associations Bill, Landlord and Tenant Bill, Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill, Law Commission Report on the Consolidation of the Housing Acts, Report and evidence on the Housing Consolidation Bills before the Joint Committee, Notes on Amendments and proposed amendments to the Housing Consolidation Bills, Weights and Measures Bill, Table of Destinations for Weights and Measures Bill, Draftsman's Notes on clauses for the Weights and Measures Bill for the Joint Committee, Report and evidence on the Weights and Measures Bill before the Joint Committee."

I understand that some of the Government's amendments will relate to matters now outstanding following the abolition of the Greater London council. Parliament will need to satisfy itself that what is proposed represents consolidated legislation and that we are not being invited to legislate anew by the back door. The vehicle for scrutinising these matters is the Joint Committee and I am most unhappy that the procedure is being bypassed in this way.

To conclude, inasmuch as the legislation represents real consolidated legislation agreed in the normal way it has our support on Second Reading, but anything that the Government propose to do which goes beyond that must be submitted to parliamentary scrutiny. I should have thought that discussion through the usal channels might be the best way to facilitate that.

10.33 pm

The Solicitor-General: With the leave of the House, I should like just a minute or two to comment on what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said.

I am, of course, grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said by way of tribute to those who have been responsible for this massive work of consolidation. The hon. Gentleman was also kind enough to refer to the fact that on 24 September I wrote to him to say that something in the order of 100 amendments would probably need to be made.

The amendments are of two kinds—amendments to take account of the provisions of the Local Government Act 1985, and minor drafting corrections and improvements. It is not uncommon in consolidation legislation for a consolidation measure to be amended after it has passed the Joint Committee to take account of the most recent

[The Solicitor-General]

state of the law represented by new legislation. That is what is proposed here and the relevant amendments take account of the provisions of the Local Government Act 1985 in a manner wholly appropriate to a consolidation Bill, that is to say, to reflect the state of the law.

The amendments came forward from the parliamentary draftsman and as soon as they were available we took steps to see that they were placed before the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. Unfortunately, for the reasons that he has explained to me, and which I wholly understand, they came into his possession only today. In the letter of 24 September, I say:

"On Second Reading I would merely propose to give a brief outline of the ground that the consolidation covers, look ahead to the amendments at the Committee Stage, and leave it at that."

That seems to be the sensible way to approach this consolidation measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Committee tomorrow.

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Committee tomorrow.

HOUSING (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Committee tomorrow.

LANDLORD AND TENANT BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Weights and Measures Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.35 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is a consolidation of the law relating to weights and measures, which was last consolidated in 1963. It has been examined by the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills, which has reported that, as amended by it, it represents pure consolidation.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Dartford Tunnel

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

10.36 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am grateful to have this opportunity, on the first day that the House is back from the long summer recess, to raise an issue of considerable interest and importance to my constituents in Bexleyheath, Barrehurst and Welling, and to the travelling public—the Dartford tunnel. To be more precise, there are two deep-bored tunnels between Dartford and Purfleet, just to the east of my constituency. The first was opened in 1963, the second in 1980. They are the joint responsibility of Kent and Essex county councils, which built them and operate the toll booths. The Dartford tunnel joint committee acts in a proper and prudent financial manner.

Technically, the two-lane tunnels are part of the A282, which runs from the M25/A13 junction to the M25/A2 junction. They are not part of the new, and yet to be completed, M25, which is a Department of Transport responsibility. They have a unique position in the national motorway network, and one that is clearly ludicrous and should have been tackled years ago by a Secretary of State for Transport.

Rightly, the M25 is the Government's motorway priority—the jewel in the motorway crown. The delays in its construction—a regular subject for Adjournment debates over the years—are a national disgrace, but we all hope that by Christmas next year we in Greater London will at last have a bypass. When it is complete, there will be much trumpeting by Transport Ministers, both male and female, and much joy among Britain's ever-exploding army of drivers. However, that army will soon become painfully aware that the jewel is flawed, and that while the motorway may be splendid, the growing queues at Dartford are certainly not.

The success of the M25 in attracting traffic, and each year more traffic is attracted, is far beyond that originally envisaged. The density at the Dartford tunnels is becoming similar to that on parts of the M1 and the M4. Inevitably, breakdowns in the tunnels are becoming more frequent. The highest recorded figure so far for vehicles travelling through the tunnels was 83,379 on 25 August this year, a bank holiday weekend, when traffic, involving many of my constituents, queued for five miles north of the tunnels. Regularly, the Department's forecasts of traffic flows have been absurdly low. A Government-commissioned traffic forecast study was published in July. It predicts long delays at Dartford by the late 1980s and the early 1990s. After making some sensible assumptions the report suggests that about 85,000 vehicles per day will want to use the tunnels on an average day in six years' time. The study states:

"By the end of this decade excess demand is likely to be causing summertime delays of between one and two hours."

This is on a major motorway. It claims that when the annual average weekday traffic reaches 70,000, public complaints about the traffic delays will become fierce because drivers will have become accustomed to fast and free-flowing progress along the M25. The report thinks that when the annual average weekday traffic reaches 75,000

"conditions will be unacceptable through the summer months."

"Unacceptable". Exactly so. Already the Government have foolishly left it too late to avoid these problems, because it would take about seven years to construct another deep bored tunnel. Last week *The Economist* said 10 years. The Department has blundered and people know it. We debate tonight bad Government administration. The motorist and lorry driver will pay the price for years ahead —and British industry, too.

The Dartford tunnel began life as a purely local crossing. The planners should have seen the clear need for the M25 to have its own crossing. The Dartford tunnel is Britain's biggest planned bottleneck. Future queues may be 10 miles long. Time won by the £1 billion M25 will be turned into time lost at Dartford. It is futile for the Department to go on talking about median flows and isolated peaks. At this late hour the Minister of State must carefully consider all the possible new ways of improving the M25 crossing at Dartford, and some of them are most interesting. A bridge at Dartford, either suspension or stayed girder, might be constructed. This might take less time and money than a tunnel. The local topography would make it difficult to align the bridge approach roads with the A282 in Kent. Perhaps the private sector could take up the challenge and fund and build a new crossing, using the very latest technology. The great need is for action. That is what I call for tonight.

In a recent letter to the British Road Federation the Minister of State wrote:

"We are well aware that time is not on our side in the Dartford tunnel and we do not intend to let more of it slip past without taking action in this matter."

With the greatest respect to my hon. Friend — I am grateful to her for coming along tonight to reply to this debate—that is exactly what my constituents fear will happen.

The Minister will remember that I led a delegation from Movement for London, which has done excellent work on this subject, to raise this matter in November 1984. I have had lengthy correspondence with her Department. She has taken the trouble to visit the tunnels but I do not need to tell her that the Government's response to this long-contemplated congestion has been ridiculously inadequate, presumably because she has not had the support of the Treasury.

The Government gave a grant of about £7 million to build 12 extra toll booths, making 24 in total, which opened in July, and to widen the approach roads. This temporarily relieved the pressure, but it was like thickening the walls of a sandcastle as the tide comes in. Six lanes of motorway cannot go into four lanes of tunnel, and sometimes one tunnel is blocked for repairs.

I should be grateful if the Minister of State could answer the following questions. If she cannot do so immediately, perhaps I could have a written reply in due course. The Minister has announced that she will commission an engineering feasibility study into how a new crossing could be built. Who are the consultants to be, when will she receive the results of the study, what is the earliest date when we can expect a Government decision, and exactly how will the new crossing be provided? Is it possible to bring the date forward? What measures are her Department taking to warn motorists of delays next summer so that they can divert from Dartford if necessary? Where are motorists supposed to go instead of Dartford? Will they have to go into the London borough of Bexley? Will EEC funding be available for the new crossing?

It is wrong to argue that a third crossing at Dartford will remove the need for the east London river crossing, which is long overdue and essential for dockland. The routes serve entirely different functions. When it is built, the Bexleyheath constituency will have protection on all sides from strategic traffic crossing it.

Current predictions are that, with the increasing flow of traffic, existing debts for the Dartford tunnels will be repaid before the end of the century. I hope that my hon. Friend will not argue tonight that the imposition of tolls is appropriate because the tunnels provide a local service to road users with the need to travel between Essex and Kent. Believe it or not, that has been the Department's line until recently.

We are discussing a national asset. It is located on the country's motorway network and provides direct access between the M1, M11 and the Dover ports. Tolls are not paid where the M25 crosses the Thames to the west of London.

Bexley council fears that if the tolls continue, traffic travelling from or to the Dover ports and the other eastern and southern locations, once on the A2, will continue through to Falconwood and use the east London river crossing to travel northwards.

My constituents who face ever-increasing costs to travel through the tunnels, would like tolls to be abolished before too long. Bexley council has said:

"no bridges within London are tolled; the Rotherhithe and Blackwall tunnels are not tolled; the Woolwich Ferry is the "Woolwich free ferry" and it has been made clear that it is not proposed to charge tolls on the proposed East London River Crossing. It is unlikely that any of these crossings of the Thames have the national significance of the Dartford Tunnels. It is apparent, therefore, that the imposition of toll charges only at the Dartford Tunnel is inconsistent."

If we are to have such tolls, far more sophisticated thinking must go into their collection. I have in mind a range of possible reductions and easy ways to pay for special users and the latest electronic aids to cut out delays.

Some of my hon. Friends may believe that all that can be done at this stage is damage limitation, after too little has been done too late for too long. But problems have their possibilities. If the Government can summon courage and imagination, bring into play the skills and enthusiasm of free enterprise and, above all, act decisively, the problem could be solved in a manner that will be of lasting benefit to the people living in the locality and to the country's transport needs.

10.49 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I intervene for only 30 seconds to express my whole-hearted support for what my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) has said. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note of the extreme concern felt by my constituents and by all those who use the M25 or live within the vicinity of the Dartford tunnel about the clear inadequacy of the present administrative system. I hope that the Department will do something to enable a toll-free crossing to be established and to ensure that the enormous increase in M25 traffic which will occur when the system is completed is properly accommodated. My hon. Friend the Minister knows well the concern of my constituents and myself. I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath for raising the matter tonight.

10.50 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I welcome the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), which gives us the opportunity to emphasise the Government's commitment to ensuring that the Dartford tunnel plays its full part as a vital link in the M25 and as an essential component in the local economies of Kent, Essex and further afield.

Before I deal with my hon. Friend's remarks and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), I wish to take issue with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath about the M25. I ask him to put the matter in context and to face the facts of the M25. There has been a problem with one contract out of very many. We now have well over 80 out of the 120 miles of orbital motorway open. There have been problems and delay with one contract, but much of the remainder has been completed ahead of time, to high specification and without problem. It has been a real feat of engineering. We hope to overcome the problems following the building of the motorway, and it does not behove anyone to pour cold water on the achievements of the British civil engineering industry, which has done so well in building over some very difficult territory.

I wish now to deal with the main part of my hon. Friend's remarks. We must get the reasons for the delays clear in our minds. I do not disagree with him about the delays—I am well aware of the strength of feeling. I suffer from the delays myself—perhaps my hon. Friend does not realise that—and so do many of my staff.

It is important that we emphasise what has caused the delays, which were due to the limited capacity of the toll booths. Once all the new toll booths are open, delays will be due to the limited capacity of the tunnel. Motorists may regard that distinction as academic; they are interested only in the reasons why and in getting through the tunnel. But it is important to understand the position.

The theoretical capacity of the toll booths is 65,000 vehicles per day, but 80,000 have actually gone through them. The theoretical capacity of the tunnel is 80,000 vehicles per day, but 100,000 will go through. Therefore, it is not true to say, as my hon. Friend has said tonight and previously, that the capacity of the tunnel is limited to 60,000 vehicles per day.

Of course, the Government have always recognised that the M25 would bring increasing traffic to the tunnel. That was why we agreed to pay the 100 per cent. grants to Kent and Essex to double the number of toll booths to 12 in each direction. That work will cost £7 million, and when completed will ensure that the capacity of the toll booths matches that of the tunnel. As my hon. Friend said, the first new booths were opened in July. The final work on the booths will be completed next spring, and then there will be 12 in each direction. At present 20 booths are in action, 12 for southbound traffic and eight for northbound traffic.

The effect of the new booths is bound to be complicated by other work that needs to be done. As I am sure my hon. Friend will readily agree, the approach roads to the Dartford tunnel are not adequate, which is why we have embarked on 100 per cent. grant, costing £14 million, to improve them. Work on the northern approaches is complete, while work on the southern approaches will be finished early in 1987. Meanwhile, I fear that the work will have some effect on traffic using the tunnel. We regret that, but the tunnel manager has told us quite clearly that serious delays tend to be due to accidents, emergencies or the approaches which are not complete. None of those things could be planned for. We cannot plan for the bumps and troubles that occur. We can seek to avoid them in future where it is reasonable to do so, and that, I assure my hon. Friend, we shall do.

As for the the traffic study to which my hon. Friend referred, the tunnel manager's report for 1984-85 said that the traffic rose from 12·5 million vehicles in 1982-83 to 20·2 million in 1984-85, an increase of 60 per cent. That occurred in the period during which the north-east quadrant of the M25 was opened and which is now taking a significant proportion of the increased traffic that will use that quadrant of the motorway. That helped the tunnel revenue, increasing it by £5 million in the last financial year, enabling the tunnel debt to be reduced by £4·5 million.

The study has also prompted a debate on tunnel capacity. I dismiss suggestions that traffic will continue to increase by 60 per cent. every two years. Apart from the fact that the rest of the M25 is gradually being opened and that some of the traffic that goes to the north-west will inevitably go along the southern corridor of the M25 and up the west side in due course, we cannot expect the traffic to go on growing in that quadrant, using the tunnel as fast as it has in the crucial period about which my hon. Friend was talking.

The present volumes on the north-east quadrant which join the tunnel to the A1(M) are largely complete, though there may be some further growth, perhaps of 10 to 20 per cent. The current increase is running at the rate of 7·16 per cent., even after the summer peak. I agree with my hon. Friend, therefore—and I have never doubted this since I first came to the Department—that, on traffic grounds, there is need for additional capacity, and that has already been amply demonstrated.

That is why we announced in June the results of the traffic study commissioned from Colquhoun's and Mott Hay and Anderson. The consultants found that traffic would exceed road capacity at the tunnel in a few years. That came as no surprise to my hon. Friend, to me or to anybody else. They found that by the end of the decade the excess demand would cause delays at peak times during average months, and that at peak summer periods delays could be of an hour or more. They also found that with the east London river crossing in the early 1990s, the delays would still increase. That tells me that we are right to get on with the work that we are now doing, about which my hon. Friend asked some questions.

The press notice issued by the Movement for London in the summer, which said that the traffic study had shown that delays of 50 to 109 minutes would occur in August 1989, was misleading. The figure of 109 minutes was the maximum delay that the consultants projected for any August Friday when traffic reached that level, namely, of 109,000 vehicles. The level was not likely to be reached until the average annual weekday traffic was 80,000 vehicles, 40 per cent. above the 1984 level, and above the consultants' high forecast for 1989. Even in those extreme circumstances, the delays predicted on other days in August would be less than half that figure, and at other times of the year would be much less still. I agree with my hon. Friend that no time should be lost in increasing the

capacity at Dartford, but I ask him not continue to repeat figures which are unduly alarmist, because to do that does not do anything to solve the problem.

The consultants found that the tunnel would be at the very limits of capacity by the mid-1990s. That is why we recommended an engineering study of additional capacity. In the June statement, I accepted its conclusions and recommendations. In July, the Secretary of State told the Transport Select Committee that it was not a question whether we should build the third crossing at Dartford, but what was the best way of doing so. Nevertheless, any commitment to the construction of additional capacity will depend on a sound economic case based on sustained traffic growth.

I deal now with the appointment of consultants and private finance, which my hon. Friend mentioned. As the next step, we are considering the possibility of private finance for additional capacity. The Secretary of State floated the suggestion as a possibility in July, and we need to make progress quickly in the light of the traffic study which I announced in June. My hon. Friend will be well aware that private finance raises new issues and that we must resolve them correctly. The Dartford scheme could be a precedent for other schemes. It is important to start off as we mean to go on.

The tunnel manager's annual report urged an early decision on the increase in tunnel capacity. It stressed also the need for proper engineering and financial evaluations of alternatives. I do not want to see any repeat of past engineering and financial problems encountered with other estuarial crossings. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish that either.

I hope shortly to tell the contractors, civil engineers, banks and all those interested in the tunnel scheme the basis on which we may proceed. This has a bearing on the engineering study announced in June. We need to develop guidance, and that has affected the commissioning of the study. I owe it to the prospective promoters to give a reasonable firm idea of what will be expected, and the likely rewards. I hope that that general comment will suffice for the moment. I give my hon. Friend an undertaking that I shall write to him with any detail as it becomes available. I would not want to be drawn on the detail now.

If the idea of privately financed tolled crossing proceeds, legislation will be needed in due course. That is because the Secretary of State has no general powers to toll, and any new crossing provided by the private sector would have to be tolled to give the promoters some sort of return.

I think that my hon. Friends the Members for Bexleyheath and for Upminster will understand that the issues are not straightforward. We must proceed carefully. I can give them both a firm assurance that I have no intention that the Department will drag its heels. I aim to see that traffic needs are met and that the public get the best value for money that we can give.

It is obvious that tolls constitute a burning issue for many hon. Members, not least myself. During the debate on Second Reading of the Dartford Tunnel Bill I said that tolls at Dartford could not be abolished without paying outstanding debts. The debt has now been reduced from £65 million to £61·7 million, but it is still true that, as the law stands, abolition would mean that outstanding debts would fall on the ratepayers of Kent and Essex, which would be unfair to them.

Successive Governments have taken the view that it is reasonable to expect users to pay for estuarial crossings. I note what my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath said about crossings on the west side of London, but I think he understands that there is no free crossing. Every crossing has to be paid for by somebody. If we enter into debts, we have to repay the moneys. It is as simple and painful as that. We are examining new ways of paying for tolls. We are examining also new technology. These examinations will form part of future studies. I cannot give my hon. Friends the Members for Bexleyheath and for Upminster the assurances that they seek on toll-free systems. As I have said, borrowed money has to be paid for, and the sooner it is paid the better.

I well understand the feelings of hon. Members and toll payers generally. Those who are delayed at Dartford should always remember—I remind myself of this as I sit in the queue—that motorists on other routes who do not have estuarial crossings can similarly be subject to long delays and are looking also for relief. We cannot guarantee that any route, be it tunnel, bridge or ordinary road, will be free from congestion at all times, especially at peak times. We all want to reach our destination as quickly and safely as possible, but it would not be cost effective or provide a real return for the taxpayer or ratepayer if we were to build roads to a standard which meant that they were empty for much of the time and coped easily with every sort of peak that we could imagine.

The Government are fully committed to ensuring that the Dartford tunnel can fulfil its role as a vital link in the M25, not just in 1985 or 1990, but throughout the 1990s to the year 2000 and well beyond. That is why we look forward to accelerating the rate of progress on the provision of additional capacity at Dartford. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath will bear with us while we go through a complicated but interesting and highly necessary process and face one of the problems that we regard as having the highest priority in the Department.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 22 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS AFTER PRAYERS

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL
Yorkshire Water Authority Bill
Clwyd County Council Bill *[Lords]*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Considered.
Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Considered.
Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL (*BY ORDER*)
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

WG/30 Helicopter

1. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Westlands about the future of the WG/30 helicopter.

11. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement concerning the Puma and Wessex V replacement.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): The review of requirements for support helicopters about which my predecessor informed the House on 26 March last is continuing.

Mr. Haynes: Will the Government underwrite the Indian order? If not, why not?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend and Mr. Gandhi discussed the order. Mr. Gandhi made it clear that he did not intend his visit here to be a purchasing visit. Decisions have not yet been announced, although we hope that the Indians will announce decisions shortly. The Government have made it clear that the £65 million of aid that has been earmarked is still available.

Mr. Eastham: I remind the Minister that an engineering force of 8,000 workers depends on the Westland helicopter contract. Although it might be possible to get the Indian order, it probably means only one or two years' work. Does the Minister agree that the British Government should show confidence in British helicopters by buying them, thus encouraging sales to the rest of the world?

Mr. Lamont: The Government have shown strong support for Westland helicopters in launch aid for the WG/30 and for the EH101. We have placed £80 million worth of work there, orders for spares and support amount to £60 million a year, and I have mentioned the £65 million of aid that is available. The Government have shown that they are prepared to go a long way to support Westland. We want Westland to prosper. The company's ability to meet the armed forces' requirement is extremely important to us.

Sir Antony Buck: We welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box for the first time in his new capacity. Will he repeat that he shares our view that it is vital to maintain an indigenous helicopter building capability and that this matter must be considered in that context?

Mr. Lamont: We want the company to prosper. That is why we have made such large resources available to it and why we have given it enormous support to help it sell its products. As my hon. and learned Friend says, the ability to supply helicopters and spares to our forces is extremely important.

Mr. Ashdown: I also welcome the Minister to his new appointment. Is he aware that Westland has shown great courage in carrying the considerable risks involved in the pursuit of the Indian order, at the behest of the Government? Why will the Government not now carry the minimal risk involved in underwriting that order until the Indians go firm in perhaps a matter of weeks? Does he agree that a company such as Westland deserves better from the Government? Is not the Minister's shilly shallying threatening jobs and the integrity of a great company?

Mr. Lamont: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words, which preceded an outrageous suggestion.

The Government have provided large sums for the development of the WG/30, and have paid the bill for a large part of its development. The taxpayer has also provided aid to underpin orders. That seems to be considerable support, and that is what we have done. That amounts to considerable sums.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the extremely valuable, and probably unique, experience which Westlands now has of modern helicopters in combat following the Falklands war, and ensure that that valuable experience is put to the best use in the export market through the ECGD giving cover wisely, which it has not been doing sufficiently in recent months?

Mr. Lamont: I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's comments. We shall do everything that we can to support the company in export markets.

Mr. McNamara: I also welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new post, but he seems to be starting as disastrously as his predecessor. How can the Government possibly justify seeking to maintain our defence industries at the expense of the overseas aid budget, when they should be

spending money from their budget to support our indigenous defence industries? Will the hon. Gentleman, in his new position, take the opportunity to instruct his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the problem faced by Westland and many of our defence companies is the reluctance of his right hon. Friend to face up to the present strains and pressures on the defence budget, and that the best thing that his right hon. Friend can do is to cancel Trident and get on with our conventional defence?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman may not have been on the Opposition Front Bench for long, but he must have been there long enough to know that the WG/30 is not a defence helicopter. That is why it is perfectly proper for us to use the aid budget to help its sales. What does the hon. Gentleman want? Does he, or does he not, want us to help to sell the aircraft? If we did not support sales of it, he would be the first to criticise us. We have done everything we can, and we shall continue to support the sales of the aircraft.

Privatisation

2. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current estimated savings by his Department for 1985-86 as a result of privatisation schemes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No private capital has been introduced this year into any organisation which is the responsibility of my Department. The royal ordnance factories were established as a public limited company at the beginning of this year. When private capital is introduced, I am confident that the current trend towards increased efficiency will be strengthened.

Mr. Thurnham: While I welcome the plans to move defence establishments to the north, what total savings can be expected from using private contractors?

Mr. Lamont: Regarding my hon. Friend's first point, we are studying that matter. We intend to see whether there can be some deployment of establishment and offices. No central estimate is available of the savings from commercial management and contractorisation, but I have asked that such a central estimate should be prepared, and I intend to make it available to the House. The present position is that 100 different functions have been contracted out, and 1,000 contracts for support services are being let annually. I intend at the earliest opportunity to make available to the House our estimate of the savings that have resulted from that.

Mr. Gordon Brown: If the Minister cannot tell us anything about the savings from his privatisation experiments, will he tell us something about the costs? Will he be making a statement about the overrun in costs and the deficiencies associated with the private sector refits of Redpole, Otter and Euryalus? Will he explain to the House why public sector money is being used to advertise the privatisation of the royal dockyards before the Minister has any parliamentary authority to go ahead with those schemes?

Mr. Lamont: I did not say that we could not tell the House anything about the savings from commercial management. Of course figures are available. For example, the Department is saving about £12 million a year from contracts that have been let for cleaning in MOD establishments. I said that I intended that a global figure for savings from contractualisation should be made available to the House. HMS Redpole was put out for refit in East Anglia. It has gone into Rosyth for post-refit work and I very much regret that the labour force there is blacking the ship. Instead of blacking ships, it should be demonstrating its efficiency.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that the least pleasant side of contractorisation and privatisation studies is the uncertainty that surrounds an otherwise loyal and stable work force? Can he help the Sunday school teachers in my constituency by telling us whether he intends to contractorise or privatise the shepherds on the Portland ranges?

Mr. Lamont: In the seven weeks in which I have been in the Department I have not yet turned my mind to the shepherds, but I shall certainly give them the most careful consideration. There is always uncertainty when measures to improve efficiency are taken. That is inevitable, but we must pursue those measures.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Minister withdraw the slur that he cast on the work force at Rosyth when he said that it should demonstrate its efficiency? The workers have done that over a very long period, to the benefit of the local economy and the Royal Navy. The real question is why the Government do not drop their privatisation plans, which will only further damage the prospects of the Royal Navy and of Rosyth.

Mr. Lamont: I do not think that I cast any slur on anyone. My remarks were simple common sense. When work comes to Rosyth, what good does it do the men themselves or the reputation of Rosyth if a ship is blacked? The men ought to be demonstrating that if even if there is greater competition, they can compete efficiently.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Has the Minister had an opportunity to read the report produced by Dyfed county council on the likely effects of contractorisation on the Cardigan bay range? Does he agree with the estimate of job losses in that report?

Mr. Lamont: I have not had a chance to study that report, but I shall do so and I shall be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

BAOR (Equipment)

4. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve the equipment available to the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985" and my right hon. Friend's statement in his opening speech in the defence debate on 12 June.

Mr. Ashdown: Has the Minister read the recent articles in *The Economist*, which show that Britain has the most poorly equipped army on NATO's central front, with less heavy artillery than the Dutch, fewer tanks than the French and the Germans, 100 fewer helicopters than we need to do our task and no anti-aircraft guns at all? If the Government are seriously interested in supporting NATO, why are they about to spend £12 billion on being independent, in a nuclear sense, from NATO instead of reinforcing NATO where it is weakest and fulfilling our scandalously inadequate commitment?

Mr. Lamont: As the House well knows, we have extensive plans to strengthen the British Army of the Rhine. We plan to introduce six regiments of Challenger into BAOR. Some will replace the existing Chieftain regiments, and some new armoured regiments are being formed. We also have plans to introduce the MLRS—the multiple launch rocket system — a weapon of devastating quality, which will add enormously to our forces in Germany.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's question about Trident, no amount of expenditure of that money on conventional forces could possibly provide the same deterrent effect.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is it not a fact that BAOR will never get the equipment that it deserves and should have while the Government stretch the defence budget over so many areas? Why do the Government not realise that the British economy and the British defence budget cannot possibly maintain a proper conventional contribution to NATO, to the proper defence of Britain, to the Trident nuclear missile system and to an increasing out-of-area capability? If the Minister is concerned about BAOR, he should cancel Trident and eventually end our out-of-area commitment.

Mr. Lamont: I note what the right hon. Gentleman said about out-of-area commitments, and I am sure that his remarks will be well noted outside the House. The right hon. Gentleman has just made an extremely interesting initial policy announcement.

As to the effect of Trident on the conventional equipment budget, the right hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that we have increased the defence budget by 20 per cent. in real terms. Of that 20 per cent., only one-fifth has gone on Trident, so there is plenty of headroom for an improvement in equipment for our conventional forces.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend promise that there will be no cut in defence expenditure this year?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend knows that the Government's expenditure plans are set out in the White Paper.

Mr. Home Robertson: Come on.

Mr. Lamont: I am coming on. My hon. Friend also knows that in the normal way in which public expenditure is reviewed, discussions are taking place within Whitehall.

RAF Pilots (Training)

5. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the operational effectiveness of the current content and levels of training for pilots in the Royal Air Force.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): We aim to produce RAF pilots of the highest standard of operational effectiveness. The operational performance of RAF crews in tasks such as intercepting Soviet aircraft in the United Kingdom air defence region; in regularly saving lives in search and rescue operations; and in the RAF's massive air lift of food in Ethiopia in very demanding flying conditions shows that such a standard is being achieved.

Mr. Beith: I recognise that low-flying is an important component of a high standard of training, but is the Minister satisfied that there are not large swathes of the country which are not taking their fair share of this disruptive activity? Does he accept that the activity should be shared more evenly? Is he satisfied that enough is done in the training programme to impress upon pilots the need to observe the 250 ft limit, which is not always observed?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging the operational importance of low-flying training, which is fundamental to the survivability in modern warfare conditions of our advanced combat aircraft.

We examine closely the areas within which low flying is restricted. It makes sense to avoid areas of high population or where there are hospitals. Our broad policy is to try to spread the low-flying load as widely and therefore as thinly as possible so as to cause the minimum disturbance in any locality. We train our pilots intensively to ensure that the 250 ft limit is observed.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the RAF's airmanship standard is the highest in the world and that that can be maintained only if sufficient fuel is provided for adequate flying hours each month? Can he assure me that that will be available?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment about the RAF's standard of airmanship, and I endorse what he said. I think that RAF pilots are second to none in the world.

We have been able to make some increases in fuel supplies after initial cuts announced this year. There will be only a small reduction this year. I can assure my hon. Friend that our combat pilots' flying hours are higher than the NATO minimum.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true that the aircraft disaster over Cumbria three weeks ago involving two Jaguar aircraft flying in a dangerous manner cost the MOD £21 million? Is that not rather a lot of money to be involved when two aircraft were flying in the manner described by people who saw the accident?

Is the Minister aware of the unrelenting public hostility throughout Cumbria to low-flying exercises, and is it not time that the policy was reviewed? Is the Minister further aware that I have more letters in my office on this matter than on almost any other subject? May we have some action from the Government, who so far have been insensitive to protests from the general public?

Mr. Stanley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reconsider the criticisms that he appeared to direct at the air crew who were tragically involved in that accident, even though the results of the board of inquiry are not yet known.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman and the House recognise that, in order to achieve the very demanding flying standards necessary in today's modern warfare conditions, the Royal Air Force combat pilots expose themselves to grave risks and must practise intensively to achieve their very high standards.

Mr. Maclean: Will my right hon. Friend pass on our condolences to the families of the pilots who were tragically killed in that accident? That crash, about which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke, happened in my constituency.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that the vast majority of my constituents dearly wish that low flying was not

necessary, but realise that it is preferable to have our pilots flying over the constituency at 250 ft than to have foreign aggressors at 10,000 ft?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I am sure that the relatives of the pilots will appreciate what he said.

I fully endorse his remarks about the critical relationship between demanding flying standards and the survivability of aircraft in modern warfare conditions.

Royal Dockyards

6. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has now received following publication of the consultative document on the future of the royal dockyards; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): More than 100 letters have been received by my Department since the announcement on 17 April of a period of consultation on subjects relating to the future management of the royal dockyards. In addition, some 2,000 postcards have been addressed to the Prime Minister by dockyard employees. There has also been a continuing correspondence with industry on aspects of the plans to introduce commercial management to the dockyards.

Mr. Hicks: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since he announced in July his firm decision to introduce agency management into the royal dockyards there has been a distinct lack of support and enthusiasm? Will he assure the House that between now and the Queen's Speech he will re-examine his proposals with a view to introducing a more sensible option for the future management of the dockyards?

Mr. Heseltine: I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about this matter. There is, of course, a period of uncertainty in the early stages of any change. After careful consideration, the Government reached the view that it would be in the best interests of the Royal Navy, the local economies and, most certainly, the defence budget to move towards a process of commercial management. I would not wish to give my hon. Friend the false impression that I might be prepared to reconsider.

Dr. Owen: Will the Government reply to the criticisms of the Public Accounts Committee, especially that the proposals could increase the cost of the defence budget? In view of the massive strain now being placed on the defence budget, is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to consider this whole question afresh?

Mr. Heseltine: No, because one of the purposes of moving to commercial management was to secure tens of millions of pounds of possible economies from the enhanced efficiency in the dockyards. Obviously, that must be my prime responsibility as Secretary of State.

Mr. Douglas: Should not the Secretary of State refer to the strictures of the Select Committee on Defence about his preferred option? Will he acknowledge that what is happening at Rosyth and Devonport is a diminution of morale in a very essential part of our labour force? Will he assure us that what happened with Redpole will not happen again—when a ship put into the hands of private enterprise had a number of deficiencies, was hawked into the yard at Rosyth and the work force took grave exception to the way in which it was treated? When does the Secretary of State hope to report to the House on the effect of that on our strategic deterrents?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has given a very one-sided account of what happened. The work force at Rosyth would do itself more good if it was actually showing the efficiency that it can achieve, and which it pointed out as being an option within the management of the dockyards.

The most encouraging development that has emerged since I last reported to the House on this matter is that, following informal consultations with the dockyard industrial work force, it appears that we shall be able to secure the enhanced efficiency and the reduction of numbers that we seek largely through voluntary redundancy and early retirement.

In those circumstances, although a state of redundancy technically has to be declared, the process from today's position to the enhanced procedures and efficiencies appears to offer an easier passage than even I believed possible when I first made the proposals.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is it not a fact that there is no support whatever, either in the House or among informed opinion outside, for the suggestion of commercial management that the right hon. Gentleman is putting forward? The proposal is based not on any form of rational analysis, but is purely party dogma. Will he, even at this late stage, drop this hare-brained scheme, which can only put thousands of people out of work, damage the economies of Devonport and Rosyth and provide a worse service for the Royal Navy in this crucial area?

Mr. Heseltine: I must take a view which puts on the one hand the views of the right hon. Gentleman and on the other the views of the Admiralty Board. I find no difficulty in reaching an easy decision to back the Admiralty Board.

Eastern Atlantic (Naval Forces)

7. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom naval forces in the eastern Atlantic.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraphs 432 to 445 of volume I of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

Mr. Dixon: Will the strain on the defence budget have any effect on the ordering of the new frigates? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that if it does, that will have serious repercussions for shipyards on the Tyne? Would it not make more sense to cancel the Trident project and concentrate the money on the more conventional service vessels?

Mr. Stanley: As the hon. Gentleman knows, a substantial amount of shipbuilding is now taking place at Swan Hunter and that a substantial amount of repair work is going to the Tyne repair yards. The answer to his question about Trident is that we could in no way protect this country against nuclear blackmail with destroyers and frigates.

Mr. Viggers: Will my right hon. Friend bring us up to date on his thinking about the replacement of Fearless and Intrepid, which are needed for the marine reinforcement of the northern flank, and which are likely to end their useful lives by about 1990?

Mr. Stanley: As my hon. Friend will be aware, both Intrepid and Fearless are undergoing refits. That will improve their capabilities and extend their lives until the mid-1990s. As the House has been told, we are examining the various amphibious options for their replacement. That examination is on schedule and, as we have said, we shall be in a position to take decisions next year.

Submarine Statistics

8. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many suspected incidents have been investigated by his Department over the past 12 months of submarines being involved either in collisions with other vessels or fouling fishing nets within United Kingdom territorial waters.

Mr. Stanley: In the last 12 months, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport have investigated two losses of fishing vessels as a result of fouling their gear where it was initially alleged that submarines might have been responsible. Both investigations concluded that submarines were not involved.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister confirm that those two cases concerned the Mhari L, involving the loss of five lives earlier this year, and the South Stack from Holyhead, which was lost last summer with the loss of three lives? Will he further confirm that the Government have received strong representations from the Irish Government about dangers arising from submarines in the Irish sea? Will the Government now give a stronger warning to fishermen about the movement of submarines, to try to minimise the dangers arising from such movements?

Mr. Stanley: The two incidents in the last 12 months to which I was referring involved the Mhari L, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and the Channel Avenger, which sank off Portland Bill in December 1984. As he will be aware, there have been a number of incidents in the last 10 years in which there has been some involvement of submarines with various fishing vessels. We keep our procedures carefully under review and, as far as practicable, every possible precaution is taken to avoid such incidents taking place, and I am glad to say that there have been no such incidents in the last 12 months.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that submarines involved in deterrent and other activities have been entering and leaving the Clyde area for the last two decades? During that time there have been a number of allegations. In a recent one, concerning the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), it was alleged that a fishing vessel had been sunk after being involved with a nuclear submarine. That turned out to be untrue, with positive evidence to show that the ship had fouled something underwater and had had nothing to do with a submarine.

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There have been a number of incidents where the initial allegation has been that a fishing vessel has fouled a submarine. Subsequent investigations have shown that no submarine has been involved.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that on almost every occasion when an allegation has been made it has been met with a denial? It was denied that a submarine was involved when the Irish trawler was sunk, until it was proved conclusively that a submarine had been involved. Should not warnings be given to fishing vessels of the dangers that arise, especially in the Irish sea, from the activities of submarines?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that certain areas are marked on maritime maps as being those of naval activity, in some instances submarine activity. I think he will understand that, given the sensitivity of submarine operations, it would be irresponsible of us to give public acknowledgements of submarine routes and deployments.

Low-flying Aircraft (Powys)

9. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the frequency of military aircraft engaged in low-flying over Powys.

Mr. Stanley: Over the past 12 months the Ministry of Defence has received 24 representations concerning the frequency of military aircraft flights in the Powys area.

Mr. Livesey: My constituents, tourists, animals, young children and others are having tremendous hardship inflicted upon them by low-flying. Will my right hon. Friend seek immediately to reduce low-flying in Powys by 50 per cent.?

Mr. Stanley: When the hon. Gentleman considers my answer, he will perhaps conclude that 24 representations over the past 12 months is not exactly symptomatic of what he fears on behalf of his constituents and their animals. We must return to the point that I made in answering a previous question on low-flying, which is that if we reduce low-flying in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and the county in which it is situated, that can only be at the expense of the constituents of other hon. Members.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to maintain the combat efficiency, proficiency and flight safety of Royal Air Force aircrews it is necessary that they obtain adequate low-flying experience, including occasionally over Powys? Will he bear in mind that it is equally important to retain experienced crews? Will he consider the article that appeared in *Flight International*, on American flying reserves, which describes the excellent value for money that they provide for the United States air force?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his point about reserves, which I accept. I endorse fully what he has rightly said about the critical relationship between the effectiveness of the RAF and its ability to have regular and intensive flying at low level.

South Atlantic (Force Levels)

10. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the reduction of Her Majesty's forces in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Stanley: The Falklands force level is maintained at the minimum size necessary to defend the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, but it has proved possible to reduce numbers steadily over the past year or so. Once the new airport at Mount Pleasant and the garrison facilities are complete we should be able to reduce still further the level of forces permanently stationed on the islands.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Against this lessening cost should we not set the splendid training facilities for all three services on the Falklands and the British stake in the vast economic potential of the region? Secondly, are there not naval and air forces which are admirably suited to police a fishing zone, which has been so unconscionably delayed by the Foreign Office?

Mr. Stanley: I think that my hon. Friend will wish to pursue his second point with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I endorse what he said about the training facilities on the Falkland Islands. The islands provide some near unique training opportunities for us, and that certainly should be put into the balance against the cost of the Falklands garrison.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister formulate a considered response to the article in the *Sunday Post* on the conditions of the 3,000 civilian workers on the Falklands? The article alleges drunkenness, drugs and "wacky taccy" parties.

Mr. Stanley: I think the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the conduct of the civilian work force is not a matter for Defence Ministers. I am not sure whether that is a matter for Ministers in any other Department, but, if it is, it would fall to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend continue to emphasise that the garrison is purely defensive and represents no conceivable threat to the mainland? Will he emphasise also that it must not be considered to be a NATO base, because it is not one?

Mr. Stanley: I assure my hon. Friend that the garrison does not represent any threat to the mainland. We seek to maintain the garrison only at the minimum size necessary to carry out our defence obligations to the Falkland islanders. The House will have noted the statement by the official Opposition spokesman that, for the first time, the Labour party apparently intends withdrawing out-of-area forces. This would, of course, include removing the defence forces from the Falkland Islands.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Minister confirm, or deny, statements in the press about the possibility of a new aerodrome being built on the island of St. Helena? Is that, or is that not, the Government's policy?

Mr. Stanley: I do not believe that the Government have reached any such conclusions on that matter.

Sir Bernard Braine: Does my right hon. Friend agree that defence expenditure is well justified if it provides a framework within which the peaceful development of the resources of the Falkland Islands can be undertaken? If so, will he take note of the increasing puzzlement at the fact that we are allowing the vast marine resources that surround the Falkland Islands to be developed by nations other than Britain?

Mr. Stanley: I understand my right hon. Friend's point. When I was in the Falklands during the recess the Falkland islanders expressed much concern about fishing exploitation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary deals with that matter. Our defence dispositions show our determination to provide a continuing free way of life for the Falkland islanders.

Washington (Visit)

12. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next proposes to visit Washington for discussions with his United States counterpart.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no immediate plans to do so. On current plans, I will next meet the United States Secretary for Defence at the meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group in Brussels at the end of this month.

Sir William van Straubenzee: In view of some of the reservations expressed by senior American Ministers and others about western Europe's determination to defend itself, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity of the next meeting to point to the recently signed European fighter aircraft deal that was entered into by four western European countries, not only for its own sake, but as an example of western Europe's determination to play an effective part in its own defence?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that the successful conclusion of the decision by Germany, Italy and Britain—I welcome the fact that Spain has now joined the arrangement—to build a European fighter aircraft is one of the greatest manifestations of Europe's determination to defend itself and of Britain's determination to play a full part in that process.

Mr. Boyes: Irrespective of the decision made this week on chemical weapons by the United States Congress, will the right hon. Gentleman inform his counterpart in the United States that Britain will under no circumstances accept chemical weapons on its soil? Will the right hon. Gentleman say also that the American stocks that are held in West Germany will be neither added to nor improved?

Mr. Heseltine: I would be more likely to ask my counterpart about his views on the 300,000 tonnes of Soviet chemical weapons that are based in positions that could be used aggressively against the Western Alliance.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: When my right hon. Friend meets the United States Secretary of Defence, will he urge upon him the necessity to consult the Secretary of State at the State Department so that they can get their act together to decide what is or is not allowed under the ABM treaty when pursuing their strategic defence initiative?

Mr. Heseltine: The Prime Minister has already agreed with the United States President our views about the ABM treaty and the strategic defence initiative. It would be something of an impertinence for a member of one Government to lecture another Government about what might appear to be two voices within one Administration.

Mr. Cartwright: Will the Secretary of State make it clear to the American Administration that Her Majesty's Government will not endorse a re-interpretation of the ABM treaty which would allow the development, testing and deployment of anti-ballistic missiles in space?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that it was my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who first made clear the role of the ABM treaty in the context of SDI and, therefore, perhaps placed on the world record one of the most important decisions that Mr. Reagan has made in that context.

Royal Ordnance PLC

14. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects that shares in Royal Ordnance PLC will be offered to the public.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Subject to the usual caveats of trading performance and stock market conditions, we would hope that the company could move to the private sector in mid-1986.

Mr. Straw: When does the Minister intend to meet the trade unions to discuss the implications for their members of privatisation? In particular, why has he refused their offer to submit the outstanding problem of pensions to arbitration?

Mr. Lamont: I am perfectly prepared to meet the trade unions. It is important that I should do so at an early date. As regards pensions, the Government have made their position on no detriment clear. There have been a series of meetings between my predecessor and the trade unions. I do not believe that there is much to be added on that subject.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in the Bahamas.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is it not highly irresponsible of leading Left-wing Labour councillors like Bernie Grant to refuse to condemn violence against the police? Should not we, and all other parties, be united in maintaining law and order and in supporting our police by giving them adequate protection and the resources to maintain law and order?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is right. The role of the police in those areas is absolutely crucial, because without effective law enforcement there can be no prospect of social cohesion or advance.

Mr. Skinner: I wonder whether the Leader of the House will today meet those who are lobbying against world poverty. Is he aware, for instance, that it has cost the world about $800 billion to produce weapons of war, which is almost equivalent to the amount of money that is owed by the poorest countries to the banks, mainly in the Western world? Will he tell the lobbyists that one of the things that the Government will do is to join others and cancel the debts of the lesser developed countries so that we can feed the impoverished people in Ethiopia and countless others in Africa and central and south America?

Mr. Biffen: I shall be meeting members of the world development lobby from north Shropshire later this afternoon. I have no doubt that they will put the arguments in a much more temperate and convincing fashion that the hon. Gentleman. I shall, in the course of our exchanges, draw attention to the fact that in the last three years the Government's programme on overseas aid has been rising faster than prices. I shall point out the role that the Government have played in trying to produce balanced disarmament.

Q2. **Mr. Temple-Morris** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, on the subject of rate reform, the time for decision and indeed for some action is very much overdue? Reviews of this subject are extremely dated. Will my right hon. Friend take on board the fact that a manifesto pledge, yet another on this subject, will be insufficient and will not carry much credibility?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is inviting me to stray into somewhat delicate territory, but I have to tell him that it is very prudent that a consultative document is to be issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on local authority finance at the turn of the year. We shall have to see how matters proceed thereafter, but I know that in the discussion which will follow there will be very keen interest in Herefordshire and neighbouring agricultural counties in seeing which political parties support the rating of agriculture.

Mr. Shore: May I turn the right hon. Gentleman's mind to the depressing subject of the United Kingdom economy? Is he aware that in the three months since he last answered Prime Minister's questions unemployment in Britain has risen by over 111,000, that our visible trade deficit has increased by over £250 million and that the index of industrial production has dropped by 0·5 per cent.? Is it not all too clear that policies and attitudes, as last week's report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade affirmed, need

"to change and change radically if we are to avoid a major social and economic crisis in our nation's affairs"?

Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that the panic and knee-jerk reaction of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to this report, within hours of its publication last Tuesday, was both insulting and irrelevant, and that it is not changes in the presentation of policies that are required, but fundamental changes in the policies themselves?

Mr. Biffen: It is an absolute caricature to describe the reaction of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the way that the right hon. Gentleman has done. This was an important report, produced by a distinguished group in the other place, and it commanded sufficient public attention to merit an immediate Government response. However, it raises wider issues about the nature of the economy and the fundamental changes that are overtaking not only the United Kingdom but every west European country, because the fall in manufacturing as a share of the total economy can be found in broadly similar terms in both the United States and Germany. My right hon. and learned Friend was merely putting the matter into context by his intervention.

Mr. Shore: The truth of the matter is that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry totally caricatured the findings of the Select Committee in order to try to neutralise, if not obviate, their impact upon public opinion. If the Leader of the House really thinks that it was a report prepared by distinguished people—as indeed it was—does he really think it right, and is it now to be

Government policy, for Select Committee reports to be dealt with by immediate, 12-hour reactions rather than to be the subject of considered and serious reply?

Mr. Biffen: The Government have a very good and well developed record of considered replies to Select Committee reports, which compares very well indeed with many of the instant comments which have come from the Opposition Benches. What the right hon. Gentleman is complaining about is that the Government have effectively demonstrated that there is a wider and much more advantageous context into which that report is to be placed. This is a comment that was also made by a whole number of distinguished economic commentators in Fleet Street.

Q3. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shersby: Will my right hon. Friend convey to the Prime Minister the congratulations of the House on the way in which Home Office Ministers are tackling the very serious problem of drug trafficking? Will he also make it clear that the new agreement with Pakistan to end production is widely welcomed? Will he say what further steps the Government intend to take in Britain to end this traffic?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend will have noted that Home Office Ministers are here this afternoon to take account of his comments, which I believe to be both generous and fully merited, for not only was my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office successful in his recent visit to Pakistan, but I believe that the House will have heard with approval of the decision from the lips of the Home Secretary yesterday that a further 50 are to be added to the drug squad in London. That is an indication to my hon. Friend of the urgency with which this serious social problem is regarded.

Mr. Steel: Will the Leader of the House confirm to the House and to his constituents this afternoon that the overseas aid programme has been cut by 17 per cent. in real terms and that this means that, while the United States contributes $37 a head, Belgium $47 and Denmark $88, our contribution is $25 a head? Is this another teeny-weeny contribution to world affairs in which the Prime Minister rejoices, and are the thousands of people lobbying today to be dismissed as yet more moaning Minnies?

Mr. Biffen: I can confirm that over the past three years the United Kingdom overseas aid programme has been rising faster than prices. Of course, it is true that the per capita contribution from the United States is much greater. It is a question of comparing economies that are quite dissimilar in their inherent ways.

Q4. **Mr. Gould** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gould: Before the Leader of the House is tempted to dismiss the House of Lords Select Committee, as so many other critics of the Government have been dismissed, as nothing more than moaning Minnies, will he concede the peculiarity of the fact that the damage which the Select Committee documents have inflicted has been done in the name of a monetarism which the Chancellor, in formal terms at least, now seems to have abandoned?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that I would accept that. I have made a balanced comment on the House of Lords report. It is a valuable contribution to the economic debate. The Government are wholly entitled to set alongside it other considerations that put the economy in a more realistic and favourable light.

Q5. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hannam: In view of the widening split in the National Union of Mineworkers, caused directly by the extremism of Mr. Scargill, does my right hon. Friend agree that now is the time for the leadership of the Labour party officially to recognise the new union in Nottinghamshire, South Derbyshire and South Durham?

Mr. Biffen: These are very delicate issues. I do not want to say anything from this Box that would unnecessarily complicate the matter. However, my hon. Friend must be right in saying that the emergence of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers on the basis of the clear and evident balloting that has taken place must necessarily require a response from the Trades Union Congress and the Labour party.

Mr. Eastham: When the Leader of the House next meets the Prime Minister, will he make special reference to ex-prisoners of war who were in Japanese hands? There were many thousands of prisoners who were deprived, suffered and some of whom died. Meagre compensation has been paid out by the Japanese Government. A constituent of mine has received three payments so far, totalling £76, for all the misery that he suffered. Is it not about time, considering the wealth of the Japanese Government, to make representations on behalf of ex-prisoners of war that something be done about that?

Mr. Biffen: I have great sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to it. Perhaps we have tended to draw a veil over the extraordinarily intense suffering undergone by British prisoners in the far east in the last war.

Q6. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagments for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to debunk the bogus mythology of Scarmanism? Is it not the approach that says that one should police only at a level acceptable to the most aggressive minority in a community which has led to a flourishing of drug trafficking in our inner cities and which has been the main cause of the recent riots that we have had to suffer?

Mr. Biffen: Lord Scarman is a distinguished son of Shropshire, and I prefer to leave any debunking to another

day. My hon. Friend is perfectly right to say that once a society slides into partial standards of policing, that not only undermines the whole society in the areas that become less policed, but destroys the inherent cohesion of the national society.

Q7. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagments for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dobson: How can the Leader of the House justify the £88 million reduction in aid to Bangladesh under this Government compared with the level of aid going to that impoverished country in 1979?

Mr. Biffen: The distribution within the aid budget clearly must be a matter of judgment, essentially on developmental grounds. The total national aid budget over the last three years has been rising faster than prices.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: In his busy day, has my right hon. Friend had a chance to consider the consequences of the Law Lords' judgment in the case of Mrs. Victoria Gillick? Does he agree that the majority ruling of the judges appears to drive a coach and horses through the concept of an age of consent as laid down in the 1956 Sexual Offences Act? If that is the case, will the Government bring forward revised legislation?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says on an issue that clearly gives rise to the most deep and delicate feelings. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is reviewing the guidance to be given in the light of the Law Lords' judgement. We had better wait for the outcome of that review.

M6 Motorway (Accident)

3.32 pm

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the crash on the M6 between Garstang and Preston which occurred at 1.30 p.m. on Monday 21 October.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing condolences to those so tragically bereaved in this terrible accident and in sending to the injured our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The accident to which my hon. Friend referred occurred on the southbound carriageway of the M6 motorway between junctions 32 and 33 in Lancashire. A coach and 13 other vehicles were involved in the accident. Thirteen people were killed and 34 were injured, some seriously. Three of the fatalities were in the coach and 10 in the other vehicles.

The site of the accident was 600 yd before a point at which the nearside and middle lanes of the southbound carriageway were closed to enable essential repair works to be done. The weather at the time of the accident was fine and bright, and the carriageway was dry.

The precise circumstances of the accident are not yet clear. The accident is being investigated by the police, and by my Department's vehicle inspectors, who are examining the vehicles involved. We shall consider all the reports very carefully, in order to see what lessons can be learnt for the future.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply and for her expression of sympathy to the relatives involved, and I pay a warm tribute to the nurses and police and members of the ambulance services who in my constituency, sadly, have faced this sort of sad task twice in 17 months, first at Abbeystead, and now on the motorway. I especially draw my hon. Friend's attention to the quick wit of the fire fighting services in managing to create a small bath in which they were able to soak gas cylinders which otherwise would have exploded and destroyed many more lives.

I ask my hon. Friend to look once more at the urgent necessity for banning coaches in the fast lane, which is already used by lorries. At the same time, I should like to pay a tribute to her for the speed with which repairs are being carried out since she adopted the motorway rental system, so that this menace to my constituents of restricted carriageways will be removed at the earliest possible moment.

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend for her remarks and join in the tribute which she has paid to the nurses and doctors, and all the emergency services who gave such outstanding assistance. One of the things that I will look at is the lanes in which coaches may travel safely, and I shall also look at all the other evidence which the police will provide following their inquiries. I spoke to the chief constable of Lancashire at 3.15 this afternoon. I may not have a full report for a week or two, but I hope by early next week to have established the preliminary facts of the awful situation. I thank my hon. Friend for what she said about lane rental, but the House will note that this accident did not occur on a restricted part of the motorway and that the weather was fine, clear and dry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should draw attention to the fact that the question refers to the tragic accident between Garstang and Preston, and not to other motorways. I have no knowledge, of course, of which hon. Members have constituents who were involved.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am sure that all hon. Members will wish to send their deepest sympathy to those who lost relatives in this appalling accident, and their very best wishes to those still in hospital as a result of the injuries that they sustained. It is also important to pay tribute to the work of all the emergency services. Their speed of reaction is vital in helping people who are desperately injured, and we are deeply grateful for the part that they played.

I hope that the Minister will look very carefully at the whole question of contraflow in this area. Am I right in believing that there was another accident in that area a very short time previously? Will the Minister satisfy herself that roadworks are adequately signed, as 600 yd is not a long distance on a motorway, given the speed at which modern traffic travels?

I hope that the Minister will also look closely at the whole question of enforcement of speed limits in relation to coaches, as well as coach safety in general. The design of coaches is extremely important in view of the danger to those travelling in them if there is a serious accident.

Is the Minister absolutely certain that the present policy of carrying on roadworks into the winter season is justified, given the difficulties which can arise, not just in relation to weather, but as a result of the restrictions invariably brought about by various barriers on the motorway?

Finally, whatever evidence emerges, will the Minister undertake to come back to the House very soon and ask her right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to arrange a debate on the whole question of road safety in relation to motorways? The increasing traffic on our road system puts many more people at risk, and we must be satisfied that there is sufficient protection for the traveller.

Mrs. Chalker: I thank the hon. Lady for what she has said. We shall, of course, give very careful attention to all aspects of this terrible tragedy.

The contraflow systems, which have clear separation between the carriageways, are far better than they used to be, but we shall not stop revising them if further revision is needed. I give the hon. Lady that assurance.

The earlier accident to which the hon. Lady referred occurred in totally different conditions, although it was not very far from the site of yesterday's accident.

I am told that the first indication of the roadworks 600 yd south of the site of the accident was about 1,500 yd before the roadworks, and not merely 600 yd as some press reports have suggested. Nevertheless, I shall consider the sufficiency of signing in these and other circumstances.

The enforcement of speed limits is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I am discussing these very matters with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who is here with me today.

This country has led the world in coach safety. In Europe we have been pressing for greater protection for those who travel by coach, and we shall continue to do so following the discussions in Europe in July on greater safety for coaches.

Roadworks are carried out where they are essential. In a sense, we are doing no more now than we were before, but essential repairs must be carried out, because there is nothing so unsafe as an unsafe surface. I intend to ensure that our road surfaces are safe, but I need the co-operation of drivers in this country. They must keep within the speed limits, slow down if weather conditions are unsuitable and keep a safe distance behind other vehicles, a distance which will be greater if the weather is inclement. It is also important that they use their lights and that they clean their lights before setting out on a journey.

Lastly, safety on motorways is better than on other roads. As I believe the hon. Lady knows, motorways are about seven times safer than other roads. Nevertheless, we shall examine every aspect of the matter.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I join in the expressions of sympathy. Does my hon. Friend agree that excessive speed kills? Was there a temporary speed limit in force at the site of the accident? Are temporary speed limits mandatory? If not, will my hon. Friend take steps to make sure that they are?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my right hon. Friend for that question. Since the accident occurred some 600 yd to the north of the roadworks there was no speed limit in force at that point, apart from the normal speed limit of 70 mph, which applies to all motorways. Temporary speed limits are, in general, advisory. We have been experimenting with mandatory speed limits, which we hope will be more easily enforceable than advisory speed limits.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Does the Minister recall saying in 1982 that she was satisfied that in normal conditions coaches could travel safely at up to 70 mph but that she would consider violations of the speed limit? Is she not aware that there are wholesale violations by coaches on motorways? It is all very well for her to shelve responsibility to the Home Office, but how often are the tachographs inspected by the traffic commissioners' representatives or by Department officials?

Mrs. Chalker: The enforcement of speed limits, like the rest of the law, is a matter for the police, but they are well aware of their responsibilities to the House. I assure the right hon. and learned Gentleman that, in the light of the facts of this terrible accident, I shall be examining the whole matter. It would not be right to start going into detail on the violations, of which there are far too many. We have continually warned operators and drivers about the speed of coaches, and we shall continue to do so. There is a responsibility on every driver, not just on coach drivers.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): As a nearby resident and regular user of this section of motorway, I join my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) in expressing condolences to the relatives of those who were killed or injured. As the Member who has the privilege of representing the area in which the headquarters of the Lancashire police are situated, may I point out that they performed an outstanding task in difficult circumstances. Finally, does the Minister agree that the standards that are adhered to by manufacturers of coaches, such as Leyland Bus, are among the highest in the world? Is she aware that Leyland Bus, along with many other manufacturers in this country, in other parts of Europe and the world, are prepared to discuss further improvements in safety so that such accidents do not happen?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has said. I have already passed on my personal thanks to the chief constable of Lancashire for the work of the police. I have also thanked the other emergency authorities. I agree that British coachbuilders adhere to higher standards than those anywhere else in the world, but we are seeking to make sure that all coach manufacturers produce coaches to a higher standard, because that is important for all travellers. I shall be happy to have discussions to learn from manufacturers anything that will help to prevent tragedies of this type.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): May I offer condolences from the alliance parties to the relatives of those who were injured or killed in this terrible accident. May I encourage the Minister to pursue investigations into the speed limit? As one who travels at 70 mph on motorways and is passed by almost everything under the sun, particularly heavy lorries, I bring that matter to her attention. There was a serious crash at Birmingham the other day which, fortunately, did not cost any lives. Is there now a mandatory speed limit in force in the area where the accident took place, because we do not yet know what the outcome of the accident inquiry will be?

Mrs. Chalker: There is a 70 mph speed limit on the road. I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the speed of other vehicles. Like him, I feel like a snail when I am doing 70 mph on a motorway and everything passes me. I ask him to wait for the facts, because then we can use that information to try to prevent accidents.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): My hon. Friend might not like my saying this, but is it not likely that legislation encourages coaches to travel at excessive speeds to beat the competition? My hon. Friend has told me that the Department of Transport does not have separate statistics for coach accidents. Will she now have discussions with the Home Office to see that that error is put right immediately and, in the meantime, take the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) and keep coaches out of the third lane of motorways and subject them to a 50 mph speed limit?

Mrs. Chalker: No operator or driver is encouraged in any way to break the law. Operators are required to operate within a reasonable timetable and to meet safety standards. I am not prepared to accept that operators have to do other than that. If any operator is doing other than that, that is a matter for the traffic commissioners.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Minister aware that the coach involved in this tragic accident was going from Edinburgh to London and is owned by the Scottish Bus Group, which has an outstanding safety record on that route? Is she further aware that the same cannot be said of other coaches travelling that route? May I observe as gently as I can that it is little use the Minister lecturing the House about speed limits as she must be aware that I wrote to her Department before the summer recess complaining about a bus company, which I shall not name, which has been charged and convicted three times for exceeding the speed limit on the motorway? The

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Secretary of State sent me a dismissive reply in which he told me that he did not propose to take any action. The Minister can have that reply if she wants it.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is here, and I are well aware of the good safety record of many bus operators, including the Scottish Bus Group. I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I cannot comment further today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that a private notice question is an extension of Question Time. There are two statements to follow.

Teachers' Dispute (England and Wales)

3.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the teachers' dispute in England and Wales.

Intense efforts have been made in recent months by the Government to bring this damaging dispute to a satisfactory conclusion. I regret to say that they have, so far, been unsuccessful. Some of the teacher unions have chosen to continue to disrupt the education of the pupils in their charge rather than accept—or even to discuss—the offer made to them. I deplore this, the damage it causes, and the example it sets.

In August, the Government offered the prospect of an additional £1,250 million for teachers' pay over four years from next April, a sum equivalent to an extra 4 per cent. on the present pay bill rising to an extra 9 per cent. by the fourth year. On 12 September, the employers made an offer constructed upon the conditional Government willingness to see this substantial extra investment on teachers' pay. Under that offer, all teachers stood to receive increases in April and November. Those on their scale maxima would have got additional increases in either September or next March. The average end-of-year increase would have been over 8 per cent. in addition, one in five classroom teachers would have benefited significantly from the additional 70,000 promotions planned from September 1986. All of this would have been on top of any normal annual increase negotiated from April 1986.

All classroom teachers at present on scale 1 or scale 2, even without promotion, could have looked forward to £10,500 a year plus whatever is negotiated each year on pay. In return for these proposals, which would have brought real benefits to the education service, as well as substantial improvements in pay for large numbers of teachers and in promotion prospects, the teachers were asked for a clear commitment to the professional fulfilment of their duties and an acceptance of a pay system which would have offered relatively greater rewards to promoted teachers and to those holding senior leadership posts.

The teacher unions took just 20 minutes to reject this offer. Since then some unions have been engaging in forms of industrial action explicitly intended to cause the maximum disruption to the education service at the minimum cost to the teachers involved in the disruption. This is deplorable and underlines why we so urgently need an agreement to define more clearly the teachers' professional responsibilities.

Since then I regret to say that the employers, by a small majority, have been willing to make offers relating to pay alone. Even before the teacher unions confirmed that their demands far outstripped the employers' capacity to pay, I repeated the Government's position. We refuse to provide any additional resources for a "no strings" pay deal which would be a reversion to the discredited approach where negotiations on pay are separated from negotiations on pay structure and conditions of service. Separation has for years meant, "You pay us now and we will talk about reform later." Simultaneous negotiation of all elements provides the only credible way forward. Notwithstanding the passage of the original deadline, therefore, the

Government remain ready to consider whether additional resources could still be approved within the £1,250 million envelope for 1986-87 and subsequent years provided the conditions for reform are met. The Government are also willing to set aside resources from within the total of £1,250 million to help employers cover the cost of supervising pupils at midday. I have discussed that proposition with the employers, and it is agreed between us that officials should now clarify the way ahead.

The Government will continue to make every effort to see a bargain struck, which would provide improved pay and prospects for teachers in return for a better career and promotion structure, the clarification of teachers' duties, and an end to the disruption.

Our objective is to improve the standard of teaching in schools and the quality of our education system. That is why we have agreed to the commitment of such substantial additional resources towards improving teachers' salaries. But we are not prepared to release the resources without simultaneous action on teachers' duties and the pay structure to ensure that the nation receives a fair return for the extremely large investment.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Whenever the Secretary of State makes a public statement, he makes the dispute harder to solve. Most hon. Members will agree that nothing he has said this afternoon has done anything to bring a settlement of the 1985 claim any nearer, particularly his remarks about teachers.

Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition value the work of the teaching profession? Will he acknowledge that throughout the past few months the Labour-led local authorities have been doing everything in their power to reach a settlement, and that the main obstacle to a solution is the Government's unfair and inconsistent public sector pay policy? Has the Secretary of State noted that even his Conservative predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), has admitted that the Government's approach to teachers' pay is unjust? Will the Secretary of State now recognise that the best way out of the chaos that he has created is to establish an independent inquiry into teachers' salaries with a remit to report as soon possible and with a firm commitment from the Government to fund its findings.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman rightly gave his teachers his advice to accept the offer on the table and to stop the disruption, as did my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), who was my predecessor in this office. Regarding the idea of an inquiry, as far as I know the teachers rejected it out of hand.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have never described the Government's approach to the teachers as unjust, and that, like my right hon. Friend, I deplore what is happening in the school rooms today, and believe that the National Union of Teachers is completely wrong in being unwilling to sit down and discuss the terms and conditions of service together with pay? The point that I wished to make, and which I now make, concerns the long-term and my belief that we must get away from annual disputes.

In those circumstances, will my right hon. Friend consider the establishment of a pay review board for teachers, such as we have for doctors, nurses and other professions, and accept that it should take account of the salaries paid to people with comparable abilities and qualifications in other occupations?

Sir Keith Joseph: I accept that a substantial number of teachers are not willing to disrupt education and are not doing so, but I must ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether he thinks that the behaviour of the majority of teachers is such as to make my right hon. Friends in government look kindly on the idea of a review body, especially as the majority of nurses, for instance, will not neglect the interests of patients.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): We, too, regret that there is nothing new or optimistic in the Secretary of State's statement. Does he remember explaining in "Better Schools" that it is the duty of the Secretary of State to secure the well-being of education? While he is talking about LEAs possibly suing teachers in courts of law, is he satisfied that he is carrying out his own legal obligations.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, I am so satisfied, though I always consider on its merits any complaint put to me. On the substance of the hon. Gentleman's question, I must remind him that successive authorities from Lord Houghton onwards, including successive Governments and employers, have said that we shall not get better schools until teachers accept explicitly the conditions of service.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Instead of arguing among themselves on the teachers' panel, thereby prolonging the dispute, should not the unions and employers approach ACAS to try to get help to create a new negotiating machinery, in the absence of which classroom disruption continues and there is an increasing risk that the introduction of the important new system of examinations will have to be postponed?

Sir Keith Joseph: But my understanding is that the employers have been to ACAS, and I think that ACAS has seen representatives of the teacher unions, so far in vain.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): When will the Secretary of State admit that he and his Government, in their sheer intransigence, are directly responsible for a moderate section of the community having to take industrial action? The right hon. Gentleman says that he is doing his best for teachers and schools, but will he read the report of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations which reveals that schools are drifting into a state of chaos and that we have not seen such inadequate buildings and poor conditions for children and teachers for many years? When will the Secretary of State put some new money on the table to get the teachers back to work?

Sir Keith Joseph: I regret that the growing of a beard does not seem to have changed the hon. Gentleman's attitude. In fact, the Government have put, on condition, a very large sum of extra money on the table.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the great tragedy of the strike is that the children of this nation are suffering so badly? That includes ordinary children, disabled children and children taking examinations. Does he agree that teachers are sick of the strike, children are sick of the strike and parents are sick of the strike? It is wrong for the leadership of the NUT

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to use its controlling majority to prevent other unions that wish to negotiate their members back to work from doing so. Will my right hon. Friend do all in his power to get the NUT leadership to negotiate, negotiate and negotiate again for the sake of the children of this country and their future?

Sir Keith Joseph: I think that very large numbers of teachers, including some who are disrupting, must be very, very sad indeed at the damage that they are causing to pupils. Let there be no doubt that the disrupting of children's education is the fault of some teacher unions and their members.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Does the Secretary of State not understand that the tone and content of his statement will anger all teachers, whom he has once again run down and insulted, and that it will also depress the local authorities? If he is serious about a settlement, will he offer local authorities a disregard for penalties? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that last week's inadequate 6·9 per cent. offer would cost local authorities £193 million in penalties? If the right hon. Gentleman will not find the money and will penalise local authorities if they try to find the money, how can he expect a solution to the problem?

Sir Keith Joseph: I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with his hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) that the teachers should have accepted the offer and ended the disruption.

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on standing firm on this difficult issue? Is he aware that the teachers are suffering no financial penalty from their industrial action? Has he any advice which might rectify the problem?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have no brand-new advice, but I remind the House that unless the teachers' unions accept that they should be bound by the conditions that have been absolutely normal for generations of teachers we shall not have the best schools that we want for all our children.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Is not the Secretary of State aware that the frustration felt by teachers, pupils and parents is becoming more and more directed at the Government for not taking a firm lead in trying to sort out the problem? Is it not time that the right hon. Gentleman took a positive initiative to try to bring people together to find an answer now before a generation of children suffer?

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government have provided—on condition—£1,250 million extra money which the teachers' unions, led by the NUT, rejected after 20 minutes. After all, the disruption is being caused by some teacher unions. Do let the House remember that. It is they who are refusing to sit down and discuss.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): As a former teacher in both the public and the private sector, I deplore what is happening in our schools. I welcome and applaud what he has just said? I seek clarification on one matter. Is my right hon. Friend aware that many teachers have objected to the 12 September offer on the ground that the £1·25 billion does not constitute new money, whatever they mean by that. Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to clarify that aspect?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend is on to the legitimate point made by teachers, that the money being made available by the Government is that which is available for spending by local education authorities and which would be subject to a contribution by the taxpayer at the level decided for the year concerned for the taxpayer's contribution to the rate support grant. To that extent it is the same as any other money which the local authorities and local education authorities are entitled to spend with rate support grant support.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Does the Secretary of State accept that if he and his friends maintain their attitude and refuse to move one inch towards a settlement of the dispute, and if the many tens of thousands of teachers of all political persuasions refuse to move the dispute will continue for a very long time? Does he accept that he will not be able to count this as one of his successes on which to look back when he retires?

Will the Secretary of State make one more effort to see whether an independent inquiry, with agreed terms of reference, can be instituted as a means of escape from this tortuous and long dispute?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman forgets that the Government have put forward a very large sum of extra money, admittedly on condition, in order to achieve that which successive Governments and Lord Houghton wanted — explicit conditions accepted by teachers. Surely that is an initiative which should not be dismissed and yet the hon. Gentleman did not even accept it as an initiative.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): What advice would my right hon. Gentleman give to parents who believe that they are paying rates and taxes to provide, among other things, education for their children and who now find that that desire—one might even say contract —is being frustrated by militant teachers?

Sir Keith Joseph: That is a difficult question to answer. The parents of the children who are suffering now are being asked — I hope for not much longer — to endure damage in order to improve education for all children, including their own, in the future if the employers, with the help of the Government, can reach the desired bargain. That is not much comfort to the parents of children who are on the verge of leaving school, but the employers' and Government's objective in seeking the reform so lengthily desired is a noble objective.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, appropriately, negotiations on terms and conditions of service should be between employers and representatives of the employees? In view of that, will he comment on the fact that the NUT has for many months been waiting for such negotiations to begin?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should take that line. In December 1984 the NUT walked out of discussions and in this last month, by a majority over the other teacher unions, the NUT ended any possibility of negotiations.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. Friend believe that the majority of teachers understand all the details of the offer which has been rejected on their behalf? If he believes that they do not, can any other steps be taken to project the contents of the package to them?

Sir Keith Joseph: I have come to think that most teachers now recognise the offer. I think that most teachers are apt to compare the offer with the rewards available to some, but not all, teachers if they moved to business and lived a life with many more risks than are attached to the award which they might receive.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Does the Secretary of State think that £8,000 a year is adequate pay for a married woman school teacher whose career has been interrupted by family responsibilities, whose qualifications cover two degrees and who has 14 years of teaching experience? That is the pay which many ordinary classroom teachers have to live on. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that unless he tackles the pay of the average classroom teacher he will not find a settlement to the dispute and education will never improve.

Sir Keith Joseph: I think that I should revise my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) because the hon. Lady clearly does not know the circumstances. The employer's offer, with the help of the extra money made conditionally available by the Government, would raise the pay of those teachers to £10,500—a £2,000 increase.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, no matter what view one takes about how we came to the present impasse, it is beyond dispute that the children cannot possibly be responsible? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, no matter how badly the teachers feel about the Government, it is unjustifiable and grossly immoral for them to take their disagreement out on the children?

Sir Keith Joseph: Allow me to give a one word and wholly unqualified answer. Yes.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Does the Secretary of State realise the damage that is being done to the teaching profession? Is he aware that morale is as low as it is possible to be and that the problems that the dispute will cause will blight the future for children who are not yet at school? When does he intend to ensure that a settlement to the dispute is found?

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not underestimate the damage that is being done by the teachers and by the teachers' unions, but if the Goverment were to enable peace to be bought with no reforms the disruption would start again relatively soon and better schools would not be available for all children.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Since my right hon. Friend's offer and position is continually distorted or undermined, will he consider communicating directly with teachers, however large a job that might be? Does he agree that the evidence from the miners' strike is that only when one communicates with individuals do they fully understand what is on offer?

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not employ the teachers in the way that the National Coal Board employs the miners. I would have liked to be able to write to every teacher, but I neither employ them nor do I know all their names and addresses. I meet them on as many occasions as possible to ensure that I know their point of view and that they know mine. I am afraid that I cannot do what my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): As a former teacher, I say to you that it is about time that you carried out your obligations to provide the resources necessary for the profession. Is it not about time that your Government stopped using the children as hostages for your own policies? Is it not about time that you stopped making emotive statements, such as that about using the law? We all know that you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are too many "yous".

Mr. Young: May I ask you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The answer to that will have to be no.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is forgetting the very large amount of conditional additional money that the Government have put on offer, and which the teachers unions, led by the NUT, have refused even to consider.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are many moderate teachers? During this year, will he do everything possible to help those moderate teachers to achieve a reasonable pay settlement, and to hive them off from the NUT as soon as possible?

Sir Keith Joseph: How can I answer other than yes?

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Secretary of State aware that today's statement will be seen as a kick in the teeth to an already demoralised teaching profession, which, besides facing a 34 per cent. erosion in pay is, according to the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, facing a decline in building standards, larger average class sizes and cuts in resources? In view of the right hon. Gentleman's unwillingness or inability to do anything, has he not abdicated his right to oversee the education system? Is not 12 minutes past four today as good a time as any to announce his resignation?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman has joined the large number of those who are ignoring what the Government have already offered. The hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), rightly suggested that teachers should accept the offer and stop the disruption.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a very serious note, is my right hon. Friend aware that to satisfy their industrial action some teachers are virtually releasing children on to the streets unbeknown to their parents? Is that not a disgrace, and irresponsible when we think about the dangers to children —especially in the light of what we have read during the summer.

Sir Keith Joseph: If that be true, it is indeed disgraceful.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Has not the right hon. Gentleman allowed the dispute to drift into a position that will be difficult to resolve? Is he taking no positive action? Should we not take into consideration the fact that the children are at risk and that their parents are very concerned about the quality of education and the quality of our schools? Into what is the Secretary of State leading our educational system? If he is convinced that his case is just, why does he not allow an independent body to justify his action?

Sir Keith Joseph: But the Government and I have taken considerable action and have offered additional conditional money. It is the teachers' unions that have refused even to discuss it.

Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles (Brighton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one encouraging aspect of the present position is that the number of teachers joining the no-strike union, the Professional Association of Teachers, has risen to 300 a week? Will he commend those teachers for taking a truly professional attitude towards teaching?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): As the parent of two children at home because of the strike in Birmingham this afternoon, I deplore the present position. However, has my right hon. Friend noted that many teachers are not wholly aware of what is actually on the table? More important, the parents do not realise what is on the table. Is it not possible to advertise in newspapers explaining the position?

Sir Keith Joseph: I ask my hon. Friend to give me evidence of his suggestion, and in the light of that I will again consider advertising. However, I cannot commit myself because I should have liked to act with the agreement of the employers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Although I deplore the tactics of the teaching profession and support my right hon. Friend's policy of funding increases only against agreed changes in contracts, does he agree that, judged by most objective standards, the teaching profession is ill-paid? Is that not leading to a substantial decline in morale, especially in moderate areas such as Lincolnshire?

Sir Keith Joseph: It is because the Government concede that we need to recruit, retain and motivate teachers of the right quality and that a different pay structure is needed, that we put at the employers' disposal, with conditions, a substantial fund of additional money.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I wish to confirm that in Leicestershire there is some misunderstanding about my right hon. Friend's very fair offer. Will he consider not only advertising but writing to teachers? Could not a little more be offered on the condition that a no-strike clause be incorporated into the agreement? No one wants the children to be out on the streets.

Sir Keith Joseph: I ask my hon. Friend to let me have evidence of what he said.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the drop in morale among teachers, especially in Lancashire, and the feeling that the dispute is not approaching settlement? Does he not feel that, eventually, the drop in morale will work its way through to the pupils in the classroom and affect the standard of teaching? In November, when the structure of the Burnham panel is changed and the effective block of the NUT is removed, will he consider making further efforts finally to settle this dispute and to produce a long term solution to an intransigent problem?

Sir Keith Joseph: The consultation process on my provisional decision to change the structure of the teachers' panel ends at the end of this month. The Government will then arrive quickly at a decision.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not unseemly for a Secretary of State, particularly with responsibility for education, to make animadversions against those of us who are virile enough to have grown fine bushy beards—rather better than that thin imperial thing there?

Does not the Secretary of State realise that none of us are unkind enough to make comments on the Struwwelpeter appearance of the Secretary of State?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I would be very unwise to make any comment. I must say that I think that beards suit the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) very well.

Teachers' Dispute (Scotland)

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the teachers' dispute in Scotland, and in particular the report last week of the Educational Institute of Scotland's ballot.

In July, the management side of the SJNC (School Education) submitted proposals to me involving a substantial redefinition of teachers' conditions of service and the restructuring of pay scales. In early August I told the management side in reply that if a package on these lines could be negotiated within the SJNC I would be prepared to make additional resources available, on a scale building up to 10 per cent. of the present salary bill, over a period of four years beginning in 1986-87. This would be over and above the normal annual pay negotiations and would add an extra £125 million to teachers' salaries over four years.

The management side then put an abbreviated form of its proposals to the teachers' side and asked it to consider it as a basis for a settlement should funding additional to what I had offered be made available.

The teachers' side replied that it saw this as a non-offer and pronounced certain aspects totally unacceptable. It refused to fall in with the management side's proposal of a joint approach to the Government for additional funding for the management side proposals and indicated that it would reject any proposal which would lead to deterioration in the conditions of service of teachers.

In a further attempt to find a way forward, I invited representatives of the teachers' side to meet me on 27 September. It was suggested at that meeting that, provided substantially more money were offered without pre-conditions, the teachers would be prepared subsequently to discuss conditions of service and curricular development.

My officials have explored aspects of the proposals with representatives of the teachers' side to see if a basis could be found for negotiations which might lead to a settlement. These discussions have produced some useful clarification of the teachers' position and I hope they will continue, but I have to say that, as they stand, the teachers' proposals do not appear to me to offer a way forward.

Meantime, the EIS announced last Wednesday a majority vote in favour of a boycott of public examination procedures in 1986. This is causing great anxiety for pupils who are working for qualifications to secure their own future. I must, therefore, make quite clear the Government's position in the light of the EIS decision.

The Scottish Examination Board has a statutory duty to conduct examinations each year for the award of certificates relating to secondary education. There should be no doubt whatever in the minds of any pupil, parent or teacher that the board is determined to do everything in its power to carry out that duty and that the Government are fully committed to doing everything possible to ensure that candidates now working for SCE and CSYS examinations in 1986 will not be let down.

The present position, therefore, is that the teachers have asked for a large pay settlement without any commitment on their part to changes, especially in the contractual conditions governing the teacher's job. The local authority employers and I are entirely agreed that it is impossible to run an effective school system if teachers have the power to pick and choose which pieces of work they will do. The examinations boycott demonstrates exactly what I mean.

I have always recognised the vital contribution which teachers have in the past made to the running of the education service by their work outside the normal school day, particularly in carrying forward new developments in the curriculum and examinations. We need the continued involvement of teachers in these activities, and the purpose of the package prepared by the local authority employers in July was to give fair and appropriate recognition to this fact in a fresh approach in conditions of service, the definition of the teachers' role and a new pay structure.

It was in recognition of this that I was able to announce that substantial additional resources could be made available over the next four years. The offer remains open, at least for the time being. But I hope that there is no misunderstanding about its status. It was made conditional on negotiation, within the SJNC, of new conditions of service.

I know that many teachers desperately want to see this dispute resolved, as do I and the local authority employers. But I have to say that after all the damage that has been caused, and particularly in the light of this latest threat, the public have a right to expect that one element in a settlement should be a firm clarification of teachers' duties so that they cannot again inflict such chaos and demoralisation on our schools at so little cost to themselves.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State's statement is deeply disappointing. It reflects no more than a flat summary of his known position. It is unlikely that the teachers will respond to what is a homily from the right hon. Gentleman on their duty, a homily which has overtones that are sanctimonious and which will impress no one. He offers no hope and he shows no appreciation of the damage that is resulting from an impasse that owes a great deal to his own obstinacy.

The right hon. Gentleman has attacked the teachers persistently and with some energy on what he sees as their inflexible, but I believe understandable, commitment to the principle of an independent pay review. Will he not accept that the unions—I use the word "unions" in the plural—have shown a willingness to seek a solution by indicating that they are at least prepared to look at a significant cash offer on the table and, once that has been settled, to move on to negotiations on terms and conditions? Will he not accept that 10 per cent. of this year's salary bill spread over four years is not the kind of offer that is likely to enable us to break out of the present difficulties?

I note the only optimistic part of the right hon. Gentleman's statement when he says that he hopes that discussions can continue. Will he please do everything he can, by showing some flexibility, to make sure that they continue? Will he give an assurance that he is not in effect slamming the door when he says that the teachers' proposals do not appear to him to offer a way forward? It is vital, as the whole House will agree, that we keep the sides talking in the present situation, particularly when, as I say, the teachers have made a significant move in an effort to achieve a solution to the impasse.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

May we have further information about the contingency plans that no doubt are being formed as a result of the recent ballot on examinations? The right hon. Gentleman says that the Scottish Examination Board will

"do everything in its power."

That does not help the House much. We are entitled to much more information about exactly what the right hon. Gentleman anticipates happening should the present situation continue.

We on this side are sad about the impasse. The Secretary of State refers to a majority vote in the EIS on the boycott. He will recall that it was 87 per cent. for and only 13 per cent. against. That reflects the feeling of frustration and bitterness and, I believe, an overwhelming wish on the part of all teachers to jolt the right hon. Gentleman into some positive action.

Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the vast bulk of opinion in Scotland sympathises with the teachers in that wish and that all those people wish to dissociate themselves from the remarks of the right hon. Gentleman's colleague south of the border, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, on television on Sunday night when he referred to the Scottish teachers "sinking so low" in their attempts to solve the dispute? Will the right hon. Gentleman do the same and dissociate himself from that unfortunate form of words?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his expressed view, which I share, that the existence of discussions, even though they are not negotiations because I am not a party to them—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh?"] I am not a negotiating party. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his agreement that it is valuable that discussions should be taking place and that they should continue. I confirm my hope that they will continue, and I hope that they continue in a good spirit.

I agree also with him that many teachers are only too anxious to get a solution and would dearly like to see one. I am bound to say, however, in the kindest way I can, that when rather surprisingly, I produced an astonishing extra sum of money in the summer, that was rejected on television without those concerned even waiting to see the nature of the offer. I hope that future negotiations can take place at a more careful pace than that.

The hon. Gentleman said that 10 per cent. was not enough——

Mr. Dewar: Over four years.

Mr. Younger: He said that 10 per cent. was not enough over four years, and that was a perfectly legitimate view to express. However, it must be put in its proper context. It is 10 per cent. over four years in addition to the normal increases each year. I am sure that many teachers would wish that more money than that could be available, but few other employees are looking forward in the next four years to anything of that nature. That is a measure of my recognition that the teachers have a case. I have always made it clear that I do not deny that case and that I wish to help to meet it.

The situation on examinations is immensely serious because if the full boycott were carried out as suggested there would be no way in which 100 per cent. proper exams could be conducted by the examination board. However, the board has made it clear—and I support it utterly in the matter—that it would do everything in its power, whatever the circumstances, to produce exams as best it possibly could. It will, of course, have to study carefully the problems, what resources would be needed and where they would be available, and I shall give all the help I can in its study of those issues.

One of the most shattering aspects of the ballot last week was not so much that it showed a majority as that there was such a vast majority for the choice of using examinations and the future of the children as a bargaining counter—*[Interruption.]* I said recently that I thought that that was a heart-breaking decision. In my view, that was the correct word to use to describe it.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. Friend accept that I welcome the large sum of money—over £100 million—which is being made available over and above normal negotiated annual salary increases? Does he agree that it is a sum upon which the EIS should at least negotiate through the proper channels in terms of both pay and conditions of service? Will he make one more effort to ask the EIS to do just that in the interests of children and of parents, who face great uncertainty over selective strikes? Will he continue to do everything possible to bring the dispute to an end? All Scotland feels that the EIS has let it continue for far too long.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I undertake to continue to do everything that I possibly can to bring the dispute to a solution. In fairness, I think that that is the wish of many on the teachers' side. I suggest to hon. Members on both sides of the House that there is a danger of it appearing absurd to write off an extra sum of the scale that I have described in the context of these discussions. When the dispute was being discussed in the summer many people asked me whether I could provide even as much as had been provided at that time to help the ratepayers of Scotland. As we all know, that was about £30 million. We are now talking about £125 million of additional money, and it is absurd to regard that as negligible. In fact, it is an extremely generous sum.

As for conditions of service, it is not realistic—and I think that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will agree with this if he reflects fully—to think about negotiating major changes in pay without having some regard to conditions of service. Secondly, it is not my wish to try to make conditions of service worse. My approach is to try to make conditions of service reflect what teachers are doing in the schools and what they have been doing for some time. Surely that is a correct aim.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The Secretary of State has referred to the 87 per cent. EIS vote. Is he aware that those of us who have children at state schools — I am one of them — are more and more appalled and find it increasingly difficult to understand, as the strike goes into its second year, why the Secretary of State refuses to contemplate an objective view of the teachers' salary structure, the result of which would not commit the Government more than they were committed by the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body? They were not committed by that body's recommendations; they accepted them, which is rather different.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is not true and not fair to say, as he did, that teachers have asked for a large pay settlement without any commitment to change?

If the Government are determined to link pay and conditions, as they appear to be, surely at least he could establish an independent body to consider the two factors together and to report before Christmas. That would seem to be a constructive thing to do. Or is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to soldier on until perhaps he gets his own way on his own terms, which would suggest that he is not prepared to consider other attitudes?

Mr. Younger: That is not my attitude and it never has been. I am willing to explore every way of trying to resolve the dispute. As for the original demand for an independent review of pay only, I thought that it was the position of most of the parties represented in the House that any review would have to be directed to pay and conditions of service. I may be wrong, but I thought that the Liberal party had made that clear. I thought that it took the view that conditions of service must be included in the review. That is the first objection to the teachers' original proposal.

Secondly, I cannot see any merit in asking a body of outsiders to consider teachers' pay and conditions when the SJNC has been set up for precisely that purpose. It has in its number representatives of the employers and the teachers, both of whom are highly involved in teaching in our schools. I cannot see the sense in bringing together a body of outsiders to consider pay and conditions when there are many insiders who know the job perfectly well and who could make a decision if they could only get down to doing so.

Mr. Alexander Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Is it not a fact that the EIS is occupying an absurd position by refusing to discuss pay and conditions of service with the employers in the same way as would any other organisation or profession? Its insistence on waging a war of attrition against pupils and parents in Scotland cannot continue indefinitely. Will my right hon. Friend advise local authorities that those in secure jobs cannot do what they like in such unreasonable circumstances?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with him that all those in employment nowadays are used to having their salaries or pay scales, whatever it may be, related to conditions of service and what it is that they are requested or required to do as part of their job. The teachers are in no different position from others in this respect except that their job is different from that of other employees, and that should be recognised in their conditions of service.

I would always regard a war of attrition as regrettable and undesirable. With great respect to all concerned, it is unacceptable that that should happen when the teachers are not faced with a Secretary of State or a Government who refuse to recognise their demands. Indeed, we have moved a long way to meet them. We are prepared fully to discuss the matter in a sensible and adult way with the teachers. We cannot regard it as acceptable that pupils should be used as weapons in a war. That must stop, for it is entirely unacceptable.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): How can the Secretary of State escape responsibility for the fact that morale in the teaching profession is now at an all-time low? The right hon. Gentleman has spoken of a generous offer, but is it not the case, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has said, that it represents 2·5 per cent. per year on top of the 3 per cent. that the Government are determined to inflict on teachers and others? This means that they are being offered about 5 per cent. per year over the next four years. Does he think for a moment that any responsible profession would accept that?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the highest possible salary available in the teaching profession throughout Scotland is less than the increase which the Government, without hesitation, gave to those receiving top salaries? That is something to which the teaching profession objects strongly. The Government are practising double standards and are prepared to treat some people differently from others. Unless the Government are prepared to accept the need for an independent pay review, we must suspect them of going for the kill in their approach to the teaching profession. That might be because the Secretary of State thinks that it is weak and moderate.

Mr. Younger: It is uncharacteristic of the hon. Gentleman to be short on facts but, as usual, he has been long on rhetoric. His supplementary question does not marry up with any of the facts. I have made it clear throughout the dispute that I accept that the teachers have a case and that it must be recognised that they feel that they have been badly treated. I have found a considerable amount of extra money to help to demonstrate that recognition, which no Opposition Member ever dreamt I would do. Against that background it is not acceptable to use children as a battering ram. The Government are only too willing sensibly to settle the issue with the teachers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Will my right hon. Friend emphasise that negotiations remain on offer, that the £125 million is over and above normal pay rises, and that the precise extent of normal pay rises is a matter for negotiation?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right; and he has corrected the misapprehensions of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton).

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Secretary of State aware that the result of the EIS ballot is regarded by most people in Scotland as marking the lengths to which a moderate and responsible profession has been obliged to go by the actions of the Scottish Office? Is he aware also that there is general agreement among the public that the teachers are entitled to a substantial increase in salary without any strings whatsoever? Surely that part of the dispute could be dealt with by an independent pay review, which the profession has been demanding. The refusal of the Secretary of State to accede to that demand shows how aware he is of the weakness of his case. Is he aware that, as the dispute continues, the public have no doubt that the responsibility lies with him?

Mr. Younger: I have answered the point about the independent pay review, and I have nothing more to add. I believe that, irrespective of any of the issues, to threaten children's examination prospects — possibly the only chance in their lives—is not an acceptable method of pursuing an industrial dispute.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): Is it not the case that throughout this dispute a number of initiatives have been taken all of which have come from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State? Now that the last

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

stumbling block which was articulated in July—that no precise figure had been put on the amount available—has been removed and my right hon. Friend has cited an amount, would it not be better for the negotiations if the threat to examinations were removed? Would not that measure promote some goodwill in Scotland and give fair speed to the negotiations?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. There is a need for movement on both sides.

There were three phases in this dispute. The first was the demand for an independent pay review only. It was then said that there was no point in my trying to negotiate unless I produced some money. I offered in December to find some extra money from within the Scottish block to help to resolve this dispute. That offer was turned down by the teachers on the ground that the matter could not be discussed until they knew how much money was involved. In August I specified the amount, but the offer was turned down on television without those involved ever having listened to it. With that sort of lack of movement, it is not surprising that we have a difficult dispute. I shall continue to try to find ways of moving in the direction of the teachers if I can, and I hope that they will do the same for me.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The right hon. Gentleman knows not only that my constituents have been faced with the problem of the teachers' industrial dispute but that 800 pupils in the old senior secondary school system have been involved in a previous dispute. The right hon. Gentleman knows that if the children in my constituency do not receive a decent education it will be difficult for them to get a job in areas where youth unemployment is about 50 per cent. If the negotiations have broken down, surely the right hon. Gentleman is under a legal obligation to ensure that children in my constituency and in Scotland generally are properly educated.

Mr. Younger: I have a responsibility, and I have intervened repeatedly to try to solve the dispute. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would put his concerns about the children to the teachers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): If the pay of teachers has fallen behind, is that not a dreadful condemnation of the EIS and those who negotiate on its behalf? Is not the insistence on an independent pay review a cop out by the teachers because they feel that they are not able to make the case in negotiations like everyone else? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if ever there were an illustration of the Marxist doctrine that the ends justify the means, the examination boycott is a good example?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. I do not think that that particular end can ever justify those means. When there is a perfectly well-constituted body representing both sides whose job is to negotiate between the two sides, that is the right place for this dispute to be resolved.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, before the House went into recess, he was specifically warned that this dispute would not go away and that he was living in dreamland if he thought that the summer holidays would see an end to the problem and we would come back to peace and quiet. As the right hon. Gentleman has acknowledged, unlike the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), that the 87 per cent. vote by the EIS demonstrates that the vast majority of teachers in Scotland are thoroughly fed up and wholly behind the campaign—this is a matter not of one or two people running others but of virtually the whole of the teaching profession in Scotland—does he recognise that in these serious and desperate circumstances for the education of Scottish children he will need to make a supreme effort to go further and to concede the independent pay review? If the right hon. Gentleman makes that effort, I think that we would all urge a return to normality in schools.

Mr. Younger: I know that hon. Members have been away during the recess, but the hon. Gentleman's account of movements at the beginning of the recess is highly inaccurate. I did not go away for a luxurious holiday to stretch out on the beach and forget about the dispute. While the hon. Gentleman went on holiday, I spent the first part of the recess fighting for extra money, and I got 10 per cent. above the normal increases. That is the measure of my commitment to spending time to try to solve this dispute.

I entirely agree that a supreme effort is needed to settle this dispute before more damage is done to the children. I do not doubt that teachers feel strongly about this matter. The ballot, my mailbag and what teachers say to me show this. I am not denying their case; I am trying only to solve the dispute. I wish that some members of the teaching profession would try harder to meet me, just as I have tried to meet them.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that parents are becoming increasingly anxious about their children's education and increasingly bewildered at the way in which the EIS uniquely has not been prepared to budge one millimetre despite the various efforts made by my right hon. Friend, the employers and, equally as important, other teacher unions in an effort to break the deadlock? Will my right hon. Friend urge the teachers to use the time of disruption — they talk of years—more fruitfully in talking about how a settlement might be reached rather than shouting from an entrenched position?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct in thinking that not only the public in general but almost everyone is bewildered by the lack of movement in this dispute. As I have moved on many occasions to meet the teachers' point of view, I hope that all those concerned on the other side will do their best to move at least a little in my direction so that a solution to the dispute may take a step forward.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the Secretary of State explain how the statement's insensitive language can help to bring about a settlement? He said that he intended to take measures to prevent such action being taken again. What does he mean by those sinister words? Does he mean that in future teachers will have no right to take industrial action?

Mr. Younger: What I mean is what I should have thought the vast majority of the public in Scotland mean.

Mr. Buchan: I am asking what the right hon. Gentleman means.

Mr. Younger: What I mean is what I think the vast majority of people in Scotland mean—that, whatever solution comes out of the dispute, it had better be a solution that ensures that this sort of chaos never happens again.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the joint negotiating body as established by statute is in many ways a model on how one should resolve industrial disputes? For that model to be effective the component parts must be prepared to use all their skills, training and talents to bring about sensible solutions. Those sensible solutions must be based on, first, the available cash; secondly, the available resources; and, thirdly, the customers, including the parents but primarily the children. Taking all those factors into account, it seems strange to me and, I am sure, to many other active trade unionists who understand what negotiations mean—*[Interruption.]* Those who know nothing about industrial relations are always amused. They have never had to take part in industrial relations or to try to solve problems. That is why they are amused, especially the middle-of-the-road people who do not understand these matters. Does my right hon. Friend agree that Scottish parents are fed up with seeing their children—I include one of my children who is taking an examination this year—affected? Of course children will be adversely affected if the examinations are not conducted properly. Naturally, I and the rest of the parents are concerned about the facts that the machinery in existence to find answers is not being used.

Mr. Younger: Everyone on all sides would certainly expect not only me but the other parties to the dispute to do everything that they could to achieve a compromise. I shall play my part if they will play theirs. Everyone, whatever his view about the dispute, will agree with me that, whatever the circumstances, everything possible must be done to ensure that children do not needlessly lose perhaps their only chance of sitting an important examination.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that what he has offered is inadequate to meet the teachers' case? Will he acknowledge that the 87 per cent. vote in the ballot in relation to the 1986 SCE examinations makes it absolutely clear that no settlement is on offer? Will he face up to the fact that he has a responsibility to come forward with an initiative to avert the damage that is being done to our children?

Mr. Younger: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that my offer was inadequate. If I may say so, it is easy for him to say that as he does not have to find the money to fund it. It was extremely generous in comparison to what was offered to all the other people in the public sector, and that should be borne in mind.

I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that the ballot shows that no acceptable settlement has been offered. The ballot shows one thing only—that a huge number of Scottish teachers felt that they should go to the length of denying their pupils the chance of sitting examinations next year. I understand the feelings which may have been expressed in the ballot. I make it clear that I respect that. I hope that many of those teachers will think thoroughly, long and hard before they inflict that on their pupils.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the teachers' refusal to co-operate with curriculum development and in-service training is having a much more severe effect upon the future of Scottish education than strikes or even a possible examination boycott? Does he agree that it is essential that teachers' contractual duties should be redefined so that worthwhile developments in education cannot be frustrated in future? I recognise the efforts that he has continually made to try to find a solution to this impasse. Will he persist with his efforts and perhaps consider a no-strike agreement?

Mr. Younger: On the latter point, the teachers have not suggested or requested such an agreement. If they did, it could of course be considered.

My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of curriculum development. I emphasise that changes in curriculum development were in no sense imposed upon the teachers or the teaching profession. They were devised within and through the teaching profession. They were piloted by teachers in schools and they were universally welcomed until this dispute arose. The duties need to be clearly defined. I accept that we must work out whether they need to be altered. I have shown my willingness on that. If we pay teachers to do a job, we expect them to do that job.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Why has not the Secretary of State seized the opportunity offered by the teachers' proposals of 27 September and recognised that they have offered to negotiate conditions of service within the SJNC following the management side's proposal to put a substantial sum of money on the table? Both elements are crucial. The Secretary of State seems to be sweeping aside an opportunity based on proposals put forward outside the profession by the churches. Why does he show himself to be so obdurately unwilling to seek to bridge the gap?

The right hon. Gentleman said in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about the current discussions taking place with the Scottish Office that he was not a party to negotiations with the teachers. Does he not realise that the people of Scotland whose children's education is now at risk are asking why he is not negotiating with the teachers? Will he start negotiating now?

Mr. Younger: The answer to that question is a factual one: I am not an employer of any teachers, and I cannot negotiate with them.

On the hon. Gentleman's other two points, I assure him and the House that when the September offer was made, I was, and remain, desperately anxious to find a way of accepting it. I am bound to say, as I said in my statement a few minutes ago, that as it stands that proposal does not seem to offer a way forward. It requires a large up-front payment straight away in return for later undefined discussions about conditions of service. I wish that I could say that that was an acceptable way forward, but it is not realistic as it stands. However, I shall be glad to continue to discuss it with the teachers.

I was pleased to see the churchmen. I discussed the matter in great depth with them. They have made their suggestions for solving the matter which I respect and take careful note of. It must be borne in mind that the churches

[Mr. Younger]

are not obliged to find any of the money needed to solve the problem, and it was not difficult for them to suggest that extra money should be paid.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Much has been made about morale—and we know that it is low at the moment—but has it not been pointed out to the teachers that morale will be even lower when they return to school, that it will be far more difficult for them to gain the children's respect and that discipline will have gone to bits by the time they return?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. That point has been made to me forcefully by teachers, their representatives and some of the teachers that I met formally yesterday. The children's lack of respect for their teachers is an unfortunate by-product of this dispute. That will take some repairing. I have no doubt that once we solve the dispute that can be repaired with goodwill all round. It is about time that we got on with it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call the hon. Members who have been standing. I ask for brief questions because we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunningham, South): In his statement the right hon. Gentleman said that the teachers have asked for a large pay settlement. That is not true. The whole campaign over the past 18 months has been associated with the need for an independent pay review. that has been ratified by two annual general meeting decisions of the EIS, supported by the ballots of the members. If the Secretary of State is so sure of his case, why does he not put it to independent arbitrators in a pay review? If he does not do that, strikes will accelerate and conditions will worsen.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is technically correct that the teachers have not made a formal proposal for a large pay increase, but in their meeting with me in September they put forward, as was made clear in the newspapers, a suggestion that there might be a way forward if a large pay settlement was made as a starter. They would be prepared later to discuss conditions of service. That all seemed to be a second-best option compared with discussing the matter in the body that is properly set up to do so and which represents the two sides that know what school teaching is all about. That is the place to solve the dispute.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline): Does the Secretary of State concede that he is deluding no one when he says that he is not party to the negotiations, because what he has been doing since the summer recess is negotiating? May we make it clear that the damage to the children's future is being embarked upon now because, although the examinations might be in May 1986, the prelims and all the preparations have to take place now?

When does the right hon. Gentleman see this vexatious dispute coming to an end? When will he use his powers to put a clear offer on the table, because the teachers have moved their position. It is wrong to say that they have not. I concede that the Secretary of State has moved his position. It is monstrous that our schools are going through these difficulties. Both the bodies should get around the table and solve the dispute. He is negotiating and he should grant a substantial pay increase.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that it is monstrous, that damage to the children starts now, and that next year's examination problem starts now. He is not correct when he asks why I, as Secretary of State, do not put an offer on the table. The fact is, whether he likes it or not—I do not know whether I like it myself —I cannot put any offer on the table because I do not employ any teachers. I cannot do that. It can be done only by the employers' side of the SJNC. It is important for hon. Gentlemen, whatever their views on the matter, to understand the facts. The only person who can put forward an offer is Dr. Malcolm Green, who is chairman of the employers' side, because he has control over the substance of the offer. I have done the nearest thing that a Secretary of State in my position can do to putting an offer on the table. I have given a large sum of extra new money, in addition to what the local authorities can offer, to help to resolve this dispute. I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Gentleman at least acknowledges that I have tried to move.

Mr. James Hamilton (Bothwell): Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that all the schools in Bellshill—half of my constituency—both secondary and primary, are on strike this week? Will he concede that the cornerstone of the request by the unions is for an independent salaries review and that if that is granted all the other things will fall into place? Is he further aware that at some stage I visited every school in my constituency and that, without exception, I found the morale of the teachers in all these schools the lowest I have ever known in Scottish education? Will he resolve the problem by granting the teachers an independent salaries review?

Mr. Younger: I am afraid that the answer is no. For the reasons that I have given, it would be totally improper to do so. It is quite unrealistic to ask for a review of pay only without a consideration of conditions of service. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that morale is a problem that we must try to solve and that it requires both sides to solve it.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the Secretary of State personally read the constitution of the Scottish negotiating committee in which he will see that he is a full voting member of the management side? Will he give a guarantee that the measly 2·5 per cent. that he is offering over and above normal pay negotiations will go hand in hand at least with an increase every year in line with inflation in that year, because if he fails to do so the 2·5 per cent. is totally meaningless? Does he agree with the teachers that what they are concerned about is erosion over the past 10 years and not future conditions of service, and that only when that erosion has been made good will they talk about future conditions of service?

Mr. Younger: I recognise the force in all those questions, and I have recognised it in finding extra money to help to resolve this problem.

With the greatest respect, I must point out that, although I have two representatives on the employers' side of the SJNC, that does not imply a controlling majority position. What I have been asked to do by the hon. Gentleman and others is to put an offer on the table. I am not in a position to do that. The SJNC employers' side is

able to do that. Although my representatives are on the SJNC, they are not able to dominate that body and it is quite right that they should not.

I should perhaps make something clear. The 10 per cent. over four years need not necessarily be 2·5 per cent. in any one year; it is open for us to discuss how that is broken up. That is on top of whatever the negotiated figure for the normal annual negotiations may be, after those negotiations are completed. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) expressed that as 3 per cent., but on no occasion in recent years has it been 3 per cent.; it is entirely his figure and his invention which I think has no validity.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (West Lothian): Was not the answer given to my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) the answer that was given by the Levite 2,000 years ago as he passed by on the other side of the road? May I be forgiven for being a little personal? Who imagines that if the Secretary of State's children and those of his ministerial colleagues had been personally affected this dispute would have been allowed to run on and on?

Mr. Younger: The last remark does not come up to the hon. Gentleman's usual high standards.

Mr. Dalyell: I am personally affected.

Mr. Younger: I accept that the hon. Gentleman is personally affected, but that is no excuse for making unnecessary allegations against other people. There is no call for that. We should be able to carry on our arguments without personal remarks of that sort.

Mr. Dalyell: If your children were affected——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The debate has been very good natured so far.

Mr. Younger: It is much better to keep it that way, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will note that.

On the question of passing by on the other side, I cannot match the hon. Gentleman in his Biblical references, but I can say that if I had had the power as employer to take part in these negotiations it might have made my role a great deal easier in the past few months. However, I have no such power, and it is no use my trying to fool the House into thinking that I have.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the light of the EIS ballot result last week and the implacable hostility of the Secretary of State to an independent pay review, when, in the right hon. Gentleman's opinion, will this dispute be resolved? Is it likely to enter a third year?

Mr. Younger: In my view, this dispute need not go on any longer because we have a Government whose response has been flexible. They are prepared to meet the teachers and discuss their worries in any way possible. That is the solution to this dispute. It will end with negotiations at some time. It is no use both sides digging in and thinking that they can get away with it. The dispute has to be properly negotiated, and I will play my part in trying to get it solved as soon as possible.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Secretary of State concede that parents and pupils affected, particularly in Ayr—I can speak with experience, as the Secretary of State knows—will be deeply disappointed that he has come to the House to make a statement but has failed to put forward one new idea or initiative? Yet, as he knows, not only is he a member of the management side; he is the main paymaster for any deal that is concluded. Instead of coming up with a new initiative, he is a pale carbon copy of his English counterpart.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that he has received from a number of people, including the organisation representing the parents of pupils in targeted schools, a specific new proposal that an independent arbiter or go-between should be asked to talk to all those involved and to try to come up with a solution? Will he say what his response to that has been? Is he still considering it? Has he rejected it? If he has rejected it, why? It is at least a positive proposal which will stop the negotiation through the media in which he has been involved as well.

Mr. Younger: There is no way of copping out of the difficult issues by thinking that there is some magic gentleman or lady who can act as arbiter and solve the problem. The two parties concerned already possess all they need to solve this dispute themselves. We have the facts and what is more we have a Government, in the shape of myself, who have found a great deal of money to help to oil the wheels for a solution.

I do not know whether the hon. Member was wilfully misunderstanding me, but I urge him, if he does nothing else, to understand what is and what is not possible in this situation. Of course, I am ultimately the paymaster for matters within Scottish expenditure. That is not denied. I have brought forward more money for the dispute because of it. But it does not alter the fact that, although I might wish to be, I am not the employer of any teachers.

Mr. Foulkes: I know how the committee works, and the right hon. Gentleman knows how it works.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked his question. He must not interrupt the Secretary of State's reply.

Mr. Younger: It occurs to me to wonder whether the hon. Gentleman asks questions to get answers or simply as part of an ego trip.

Fight World Poverty (Lobby)

5.7 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I raise with you a matter which I believe touches in no small part on the rights and exercise of discretion of all members of the House?

During the recess I, like many other colleagues, was approached by "Fight World Poverty" which sought to arrange a meeting with my constituents. I, and other hon. Members, met lobbies from our own constituencies today and arranged directly our own interview rooms for that purpose. I make no objection to any lobby, least of all this, desiring to put forward its point of view, but I am concerned, in this initial invitation, that this particular lobby said that the office of the Serjeant at Arms had asked it to administer bookings of interview rooms and the Grand Committee Room on behalf of hon. Members. Whilst not wishing to overstate this, I suggest that there is a difficulty in terms of precedent which may arise if we allow any outside lobby group, however worthy its objective, to take over the booking of rooms here, which should be the sole responsibility of Members of Parliament.

I was additionally concerned when I went down to the interview rooms this afternoon to find outside, seated behind a table, an organiser who asked what she could do for me and indicating to which room I should go to meet my constituents, when I had booked a room directly. I inquired of her whether our own attendant for the interview rooms was not sufficient but she advised me that she had taken over for today.

As we are charged with responsibility for the security of people who come to the House as our guests and visitors, and as it is for hon. Members to decide whether to meet people, when they do so and whom they meet, we should zealously guard our right to book our own committee rooms. After all, worthy as the objectives of any lobby may be, we may have pressing individual cases raised by our constituents which in our judgment take precedence over the wider objectives of any lobby, and it would be a shame if Committee Rooms in which to meet them were pre-empted because this responsibility had been handed over to any other lobby.

I ask you if you will be good enough to look into this.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point. I confirm that it is the prerogative of hon. Members to book rooms. I understand that the booking took place because the organisers of that lobby came to the Serjeant at Arms' office during the recess, and it was considered that this was the most orderly way of dealing with the matter. However, it is not a precedent that will be followed in future, and I shall certainly look into it.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With regard to what my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has just said and the comments that you made, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that the organisation asked for the rooms during the recess, surely Members of Parliament who wished to obtain Committee Rooms for parliamentary business immediately after the recess was concluded were placed in an unfortunate position, as I was. Two weeks before the recess was over, I endeavoured to book a Committee Room, but could not even get an interview room in Norman Shaw. Every single Committee Room in the House and interview room in any of the buildings in the Palace of Westminster had been booked by that organisation. I confirm what my hon. Friend said, that the organisation said that it was responsible for the bookings of those rooms. I am glad that you are taking up the matter, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It was not my information that the organisation had booked all the Committee Rooms. I understood that it had been allowed to book W interview rooms off Westminster Hall. However, I repeat that I shall look into the matter.

European Communities (Finance) Bill

5.13 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Bill deals with an amendment to the European Communities Act 1972. It also deals with a surrender of parliamentary sovereignty over a certain amount of taxpayers' money, some of which will be eventually controlled by the EEC Commission. So that we know in advance, can you tell us, Mr. Speaker, what will happen in the other place if the Bill is passed after today's debate? Can you say what the other place will be able to do, what debates it can have, what amendments it can consider and what action can be taken?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for what goes on in the other place. I can only advise and help the hon. Gentleman as to what may go on here.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you say whether it is a money Bill?

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with long-standing practice, I take that into consideration when and if the Bill is given a Third Reading and not before. My decision will be published in the Votes and Proceedings.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you make that announcement tomorrow, is it true that there will be only six sitting days for the other place to go through the full process of considering this fundamental constitutional Bill? If the other place does not manage to complete consideration those days, is the Bill dead?

Mr. Speaker: I am not in any way concerned with what goes on in another place. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman.

Public Opinion Polls (Prohibition at Election Times)

5.15 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the holding of and publication of the results of opinion polls about voting intentions at times prior to general elections and by-elections for the House of Commons.

To try to help the House after the laborious points of order and everything else, I shall try to be as brief as possible and not deal extensively with market research opinion and so on.

All right hon. and hon. Members fully understand that the only poll that matters finally in an election is the result of the votes counted at the ballot box. Many years ago that depended on the political parties' presentation of their policies. The electors listened to speeches on street corners, in parks or local halls and coverage by radio or other means had very little impact. But now, in 1985, with mass media coverage on the box in the corner of many homes, electors are easily persuaded by the announcement of the result of opinion polls.

Considerable sums of money are spent on the commissioning of those polls. We are all aware of the international code of practice that pollster organisations are obliged to follow. Nevertheless, the honesty, objectivity, efficiency and techniques used can result in the presentation of biased, manipulated results for partisan political purposes. Most hon. Members are well aware of many polls that predicted a totally different result from the actual result at the counting of the votes.

I refer in particular to the recent by-election at Brecon and Radnor. On the day of the election, one opinion poll gave the Labour candidate an 18 per cent. lead. That undoubtedly resulted in many known voters not voting, thinking that the candidate would be elected with a substantial majority. In fact, the alliance candidate won by 1·5 per cent.

I could give many more examples of similar results and predictions, such as one recent announcement that was not only a maverick but was absolute nonsense. It was bold enough to suggest to thinking, intelligent electors on 19 September that the alliance had a 9·5 per cent. lead over Labour. Surely that is proof enough that the Bill, with its objectives, is absolutely necessary.

Many countries ban opinion polls before elections—Portugal recently adopted legislation on similar lines. If we are to preserve the true democratic process of electing a Government by the majority accepting the presentation of political parties' policies, we must ensure that pollsters are not the deciding factor and that they are not allowed to sway electors to vote for a party the policies of which are not liked just to keep out another party that is liked even less. Tactical voting is encouraged by the present applied system. Until the electorate votes according to conscience, principle and the policies presented, uninfluenced by somewhat bizarre pollster predictions, we are allowing the franchise won for us after a considerable struggle by former generations to be lost to the fancies and favourites of the few large influential pollster organisations.

I conclude by hoping that those organisations will understand the real need for legislation. Only today I received a letter from the chairman of the Market Research

[Mr. Ray Powell]

Society, Mr. Peter Bartram, confirming discussions that I had with Phyllis Vangelder, Gordon Heald and himself welcoming the setting up of an all-party parliamentary working group to discuss matters of concern relating to the commissioning, execution and reporting of election polls.

I therefore urge all hon. Members to support my request for leave to bring in the Bill so that a fair, sound and practical solution is found for this extremely worrying problem.

5.20 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I oppose this Bill which has the same chance of reaching the statute book whether I got up or indeed whether the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) had got up. The Bill comes under the loose heading of finding cures for which there is no disease. It is a sour grapes Bill. If we look at the history we find it is quite simply that the Labour party was peeved that for once it had come top of an opinion poll —and commissioned the printing of a lot of newspapers with a lot of misleading headlines — and found at the end it had not won the election.

One has only to look at the identity of the person bringing it in, someone who lives not a million miles from Brecon and Radnor where we had such success and Labour had such failure, to see that the Bill is suggested by a whinger, an honourable whinger.

Were it ever to become an Act of Parliament it would be an instrument for suppression of the freedom of the press, suppression of professional opinion. It is an anti-free speech measure and an ineffective one because, given the way the Bill is proposed, only professional organisations will be barred from publishing, which means that if an amateur were to come up with findings there would be no way in which he could be stopped. The effect of the Bill would be rather like banning meteorologists from forecasting the weather a week before a garden party in case anyone might be put off from going. *[Interruption.]*

As I listened to the hon. Member for Ogmore, which is more than his hon. Friends seem to be doing to me, it appeared that he was against the publication of a technically devised, scientifically evolved opinion poll. If this were a Bill to gag MORI, that most inaccurate of opinion poll organisations, there might be a lukewarm argument in favour of it, but I should still oppose it because it is right for anyone who comes to a finding to have the right to publish that finding. We on these Benches have more respect for the virtue and responsibility of the electorate than to believe they are going to be vastly moved by an opinion poll, inaccurate as opinion polls have been found to be over the years.

In 1967 a Speaker's conference suggested that opinion polls be barred from publication for 72 hours before an election. The Labour Government that year very properly threw out that recommendation. In 1969 in West Germany legislation was brought in making it illegal to publish the results of opinion polls. *The Times* of London conducted a survey in West Germany and published it, and it was reported in the West German newspapers in their foreign affairs pages. That is what happens when you bring in legislation which is as impractical as that was.

This Bill would charter amateurs and would make illegal the professional findings of organisations which have spent much money and time trying to find a solution. If it were accepted it would be the precursor of a whole range of Labour legislation to ban what Labour does not like to hear. Anyone who believes in the freedom of the press, must oppose this Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 124, Noes 128.

Division No. 294] **[5.24 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Conway, Derek
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Edward
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Straw, Jack
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Corrie, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freud, Clement
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Meadowcroft, Michael
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parris, Matthew
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Silvester, Fred
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. Rob Hayward.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 1 July]
[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I wish to ask whether it is in order to proceed with the Bill in the light of the following circumstances. On Second Reading on 25 June, as reported at column 801 of the *Official Report*, the Minister introducing the Bill said that on the basis of his calculations our contribution this year would be £750 million. Only two weeks ago, however, the Government published a White Paper, Cmnd. 9633, saying that our net contribution would be £1,212 million. In view of the uncertainty created by that enormous difference of more than £500 million would it not be best to adjourn the debate and ask for a statement from the Chancellor to explain why that alarming difference has arisen in three short months?

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): These are not matters for the Chair although they are clearly matters that can be discussed in the debate and taken into account by the House when it makes its decision on Third Reading.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. We are now in Committee on the Bill but we have not proceeded to any amendments and I understand that provisionally none has been selected. The first sitting of the Committee began on 1 July and ended at 12.12 the following morning. At that stage there was an understanding between the usual channels—I appreciate that you, Mr. Walker, would not have been a party to this or take cognisance of it—that, for a very good reason, the Bill would not be proceeded with any further before the summer recess. That was indeed the case, as in the remaining four weeks of parliamentary time no further progress was made and no attempt was made by the Government to cause the Committee to sit again. Our proceedings today are the result of that arrangement. The Milan summit meeting forced the Government to realise that they might have to make certain concessions and they wished to have a bargaining counter—the passage or non-passage of the Bill — to use in international negotiations.

In the course of the summer, a number of meetings of Foreign Ministers and Finance Ministers took place but so far there has been no opportunity for the House to consider the progress of those deliberations, many of which have a most important bearing on the Treaty of Rome, the powers of the European Assembly, the competence of the Commission and various other issues with which I shall not weary the Committee. As those issues have not been resolved, the Committee should now be looking for a statement from the Government explaining why no statement has been made about the results of the deliberations which originally caused them to postpone the Committee stage in July.

The Chairman: I have listened patiently to the hon. Gentleman but there is no point of order for me. Disputes about what did or did not happen through the usual channels must be pursued with the usual channels and not

[The Chairman]

with me, although it seems to me that the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman are matters which the House will wish to take into account in deciding whether the Bill should be given a Third Reading.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Walker.

The Chairman: If it is on a different matter I will take the point of order.

Mr. Budgen: Further to the latter part of what the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) said, it was well understood——

The Chairman: Order. We cannot have a debate in Committee about what might or might not have been said or understood between the usual channels. They have nothing to do with me.

Mr. Budgen: Of course not. I did not intend to refer to that. What the Committee anticipated was that if there were international discussions which might affect the value of the dollar, which is a crucial factor in deciding the cost——

The Chairman: Order. I am sorry. We cannot have a debate about these matters under the guise of points of order. They are not points of order. They are not matters for me; with respect, they are not matters for the Committee. If the hon. Gentleman seeks to catch the Speaker's eye, they may be relevant on Third Reading, but they are not matters for the Committee.

Mr. Budgen: The only point I wished to make was whether the Committee would want to proceed. We have the good fortune to have the Chancellor of the Exchequer here this afternoon. He has been engaged in international negotiations designed to reduce the value of the dollar against other currencies. That could have a horrifying effect on the cost of the common agricultural policy. He has an opportunity——

The Chairman: Order. I must check the hon. Gentleman. He is raising highly contentious and debatable matters. If I allow him to continue, in fairness to the Committee I would have to allow other hon. Members to follow his line of reasoning. That I cannot do. It would be out of order. The Committee should continue with——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. The Committee should continue with its proper business.

Question put, That the Bill be reported,without amendment, to the House.

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order.

The Chairman: The Question was put. The hon. Gentleman should have sought to catch my eye before I put the Question. The Committee is now dividing.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect, that is what we were trying to do because we anticipated that the Committee might not wish to proceed further. We sought as best we could to raise those points that might concern the Committee. If the mood of the Committee had been that we should continue we would not have wished to take the matter to a Division. Since it seems impossible to discuss these preliminary matters, we are forced to bring the matter to a Division.

The Chairman: The motion before the Committee was not debatable and it would not have been in order for me to allow the hon. Gentleman to pursue a line of argument on the Question that was before the Committee. The Question has been put and the Committee is dividing.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Walker. Can you explain why the official Community document which relates to Cmnd. 9548 has different words on it from the one that was presented to the House? Is it therefore in order to proceed with the debate? I can give the papers to you.

The Chairman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for a moment.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I was raising a serious point of order but clearly you do not wish to consider it. May I put a second point of order? As a guardian of the interests of hon. Members you must be aware that at least 20 hon. Members wished to participate in the debate but did not stand up because they thought that you were considering points of order. Surely it is a negation of the rights of hon. Members that you should not permit a debate to take place.

The Chairman: I thought I had made it clear to the Committee that the Question before the Committee could not be debated. The only Question before the Committee is the Question that I put, and it is not debatable.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered)*: Why is it not debatable?

The Chairman: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not persist in challenging my rulings.

Mr. Neubert and Mr. Donald Thompson *were appointed Tellers for the Ayes but, no Member being willing to act as Teller for the Noes,* The Chairman *declared that the Ayes had it.*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

5.45 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Ian Gow): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Perhaps it would be in order to express the hope that those of my hon. Friends who sought to speak earlier may catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary moved the Second Reading of the Bill on 25 June he described it as

"the most significant piece of primary legislation affecting our position in the Community since the European Communities Bill 1972."—[*Official Report,* 25 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 797.]

The Bill before the House has two purposes. First, it is to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the Community's new own resources decision, which implements the Fontainebleau agreement of 26 June 1984. That agreement provides for an abatement system for the United Kingdom and for the raising of the Community's VAT ceiling to 1·4 per cent. with effect from 1 January 1986. Secondly, it is to enable the Government to pay their contribution of some £250 million under the intergovernmental agreement of 24 April 1985 on supplementary financing for this year's Community budget.

The first of these purposes is by far the more important. The agreement reached at Fontainebleau constituted a fundamental change in the operation of the Community. It provided for a lasting and automatic mechanism for reducing the UK's net contributions to the Community budget—

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Temporary.

Mr. Gow —the kind of mechanism which successive British Governments have been seeking since we joined the Community on 1 January 1973. [HON. MEMBERS: "Temporary."] Despite the dissent of some of my hon. Friends, I use the word "lasting" deliberately because the new system will last until such time as all member states —*[Interruption.]* I invite Opposition Members to listen. The new system will last until such time as all member states, including the United Kingdom, agree unanimously to change it. I welcome the former Foreign Secretary because the Government are now celebrating an achievement which eluded him when——

Mr. Dennis Healey (Leeds, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful that the right hon. Gentleman thinks I was Foreign Secretary. That is after the next election.

Mr. Gow: I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman. I should have said the former Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Neither the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling nor the abatement system can be altered save with the consent of the House. The principle and the mechanics of an abatement system have been established.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I apologise for coming in so quickly, but my hon. Friend said that this is to be a permanent and durable system. Will he give a commitment to the House at this stage that there will be no soft loans, intergovernmental agreements, whip rounds or any other form of temporary subvention to the Community in the meantime?

Mr. Gow: I was developing the argument that the present arrangements can be altered only with the House's consent. We have an abatement system which lasts until the House decides otherwise.

The years of protracted argument about whether there should be such a system and, if so, what form it should take, are behind us. As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury has said, Fontainebleau has changed the rules for good.

A second advantage of the new abatement system is that it is automatic. The United Kingdom now has an absolute and guaranteed entitlement to VAT abatement linked to our budgetary position. With effect from January 1986, we shall recover 66 per cent. of the gap in the previous year between our own VAT share of the Community's allocated budget and our share of receipts from the budget.

In Committee on 1 July, hon. Members expressed concern that the Commission had been entrusted with the task of calculating the amount of our abatement, but the Commission has always been responsible for making calculations of this kind. It has access to all the relevant figures and is better equipped for the task than anyone else. It goes without saying that the Treasury, and notably the Minister of State, will be monitoring the Commission's calculations most carefully.

I remind the House that, a fortnight ago, the Commission proposed an increase in the provision for our 1986 abatement. I should explain how this has come about. After the Commission had prepared the preliminary draft budget for 1986, the United Kingdom made an additional payment, in accordance with the Community's established practice, to adjust for an underpayment of VAT in respect of 1984 and earlier years. This payment is eligible for abatement and the Commission has therefore proposed a correction, which would increase the provision for our abatement in the 1986 budget from about £830 million to about £980 million.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Can my hon. Friend help the House by giving his estimate of the VAT percentage represented by the 1986 preliminary draft budget as it is known at this stage? Can he help us further by saying when he thinks the Community will reach the full extent of the 1·4 per cent. of VAT? Moreover, can he give an absolute undertaking that under no foreseeable circumstances will the Government ask the House to go beyond the 1·4 per cent.?

Mr. Gow: I shall deal with my hon. Friend's first point later in my speech. As for the other two, my hon. Friend knows that the 1·4 per cent. ceiling that was agreed at Fontainebleau applies unless and until it is altered by the House. That was made clear by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Budgen: Perhaps my hon. Friend will give his interpretation of why, in the Fontainebleau agreement, 1·6 per cent. was mentioned.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend well knows that, alas, some members of the Community are not as keen as the Government to restrain the growth of Community spending. That is why that figure was put in. The Government are determined to do everything that they can to restrain the growth of Community spending.

Mr. Budgen: That is what people said about sanctions in South Africa.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend might have misunderstood the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). He was asking whether the Government will give a commitment that they will not come to the House with another intergovernmental payment additional to the 1·4 per cent. and quite apart from any increase in own resources. The Government have said that they regretted doing that. Will they give a categorical assurance that they will not do it again?

Mr. Budgen: Even a teeny one?

Mr. Gow: Provided that the budgetary discipline that has been agreed is observed, as I hope that it will be, there will be no need to come back to the House for another intergovernmental agreement.

The effect of the Fontainebleau agreement is that, taking one year with another, our net contribution will be about half of what it would have been if we had insisted on retaining the VAT ceiling but had been unable—as would almost certainly have been the case—to negotiate any further refunds and abatements. As it is, over this and the next two financial years we expect to receive abatements totalling some £2·6 billion.

Our own VAT contribution rate is likely to remain below 1 per cent. throughout the lifetime of the 1·4 per cent. ceiling. On the basis of the 1986 draft budget

[Mr. Gow]

established by the Council last month, and taking account of the Commission's correction to our abatement, our VAT rate in 1986 would be about 0·56 per cent. The other member states will be paying about 1·2 per cent.

Earlier this month the Government laid before Parliament the White Paper on the 1985 Community budget that gave an estimate of £1·2 billion for our net contribution for this calendar year. That figure is very high —it is far too high—but, mercifully, it is an erratic figure which will be reflected automatically in a particularly high abatement in 1986.

There are two special features about the 1985 figure which I must emphasise to the House. First, 1985 is the last year in which we are due to receive a flat-rate correction to our net contribution. On the assumption that the new own resources decision is ratified by all member states, the full automatic abatement of our VAT contribution, as agreed at Fontainebleau, will take effect from 1 January. That means that next year's abatement will be much greater than this year's. The Commission's latest estimate is for an abatement of some £980 million next year compared with £590 million this year.

Secondly, this year's net contribution figure has been inflated artificially by two exceptional factors. It includes our special contribution of some £119 million under the intergovernmental agreement for the 1984 budget as well as the special contribution of some £250 million in respect of the 1985 budget. It also includes a payment of £75 million of VAT own resources which has resulted from the change in 1984 in the United Kingdom's system for collecting VAT on imports.

The £1·2 billion for our net contribution this year also includes some £135 million in respect of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Community's overseas aid programme. That £135 million is part of the United Kingdom's overseas aid budget, and is shown as such in our public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Deakins: Can the Minister assure the House that the special contributions of £250 million for 1985 to top up the budget will not be repeated in any form? By giving the figure for our net VAT contribution, the hon. Gentleman is in danger of misleading the House and the country about the United Kingdom's total payments to the EEC, as they must take account of the possibility of the big rebate that we hope to get next year and of the possibility, which is not ruled out by this legislation, of a further special contribution under another intergovernmental agreement.

Mr. Gow: It is extremely difficult to envisage the circumstances in which the situation that the hon. Gentleman describes would arise.

The second element in the Fontainebleau agreement was the increase in the VAT ceiling from 1 per cent. to 1·4 per cent. The Government have been criticised for agreeing to it, but the United Kingdom's VAT rate is virtually certain, because of our abatement, to remain below 1 per cent. Moreover, the raising of the ceiling was necessary to enable the other member states to fund our abatement. As our VAT rate goes down, theirs has to go up to maintain the Community's revenue. This would have been impossible within a 1 per cent. ceiling.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said during the Second Reading debate that he regretted that the Government had agreed to link the questions of our abatement and the increase in the VAT ceiling in a single package. With the greatest respect to my right hon. Friend and to the work of his Committee, that criticism is not justified. It was only as part of a package that the United Kingdom was able to secure an abatement system at all. What we have secured is immensely valuable to us and infinitely preferable to that continuation of the status quo, which some right hon. and hon. Members say that they would have preferred.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that reference. However, the Government did not start from that position, but from the position that we were being unfairly treated and had no reason to give a quid pro quo.

My hon. Friend's response to my earlier intervention was extremely worrying. When asked if there would be any further topping-up above the 1·4 per cent. ceiling before negotiations were held to raise that ceiling, he said that that might be the case if the budgetary discipline did not work. Yet the whole basis on which we are being asked to agree to the Bill is that effective budgetary discipline is in place. How, then, can there be any question of increasing the amount above the 1·4 per cent. ceiling by IGA or another device between now and any negotiations on raising that ceiling?

Mr. Gow: I repeat that the 1·4 per cent. ceiling is in place. It can be altered only with the consent of the House and with the unanimous agreement of the Governments and Parliaments of other member states. It is impossible to envisage the kind of circumstances in which it would be necessary for the Government to come back to the House in the way which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing describes.

Mr. Higgins: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend a second time, but I do not understand what he just said. Are we to understand that he thinks it impossible that there will be any need to come back to the House before any negotiations on raising the 1·4 per cent. ceiling take place? If so, can he give us a categorical assurance that the Government will not in any way increase the sums available to the Common Market before those negotiations take place?

Mr. Gow: I repeat that I find it impossible to envisage circumstances in which the Government will come back to the House in the way that my right hon. Friend describes.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Give a guarantee.

Mr. Gow: No, I cannot give a guarantee, but I find it impossible to envisage circumstances in which my right hon. Friends or I would come back to the House.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend understand the basis of the unhappiness at this state of affairs? For many years and until only a few months ago the Government assured us that they found it difficult to envisage any circumstances in which the 1 per cent. ceiling would have to be breached, precisely because it was a source of discipline on the Community. Does my hon. Friend accept that the cause of unhappiness among some of us now is that he is giving the same assurance about the 1·4 per cent. ceiling as was repeatedly given about the 1 per cent. ceiling, and that we doubt its validity for the same reason?

Mr. Gow: I am not saying that the Government will never come back and seek an amendment to the 1·4 per cent. ceiling. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing made a different point about the IGA. I am telling the House that it is sovereign in the matter. Only if Parliament agrees to an increase in the 1·4 per cent. ceiling, can that ceiling be raised.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gow: I should like to make progress as I have already given way.

Some hon. Members have sought an assurance that the House will be kept fully informed about the financial implications for the United Kingdom of the new own resources decision and, in particular, about the United Kingdom's VAT abatement. I give the following undertaking. We will continue to provide to the House the most comprehensive information about the United Kingdom's transactions with the Community. White Papers and explanatory memoranda will draw specific attention to figures relating to the United Kingdom's abatement.

I turn next to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) about budgetary discipline. The Government have never claimed, and I certainly do not claim this afternoon, that last December's budget discipline agreement is perfect. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, made this clear when the House discussed the agreement. What we have said, as I do today, is that the agreement is an enormous advance on what has gone before.

Community spending is still too high. Nevertheless, the Commission has agreed to make all its proposals on agriculture in the light of the guideline limiting the rate of growth of agricultural guarantee spending to the rate of growth of the own resources base. The Commission's price proposals in June, and its budget proposals, are consistent with the guideline figure established for 1986. As a result, agricultural market support expenditure next year for the 10 member states is planned to grow by only 2·5 per cent., compared with 27·6 per cent. in 1983, 16·1 per cent. in 1984 and 8·9 per cent. in 1985. The downward trend is continuing. Last year, real price cuts of 4 per cent. were imposed on the CAP. This year there are real cuts of 3·5 per cent. Prices for most product regimes have been frozen.

Last month the Council established a draft budget for 1986 which respected the budget discipline conclusions and the reference framework set by the ECOFIN council in July, with limited additions for enlargement. The extra expenditure in 1986 on account of enlargement is covered by the extra revenues which Spain and Portugal will contribute.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that the assurances and safeguards about restrictions on agricultural spending become worthless and of no account, if the majority of member states consider that there have been exceptional or aberrant circumstances and can define what they are? It might mean rain on a Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Gow: I do not agree with my hon. Friend, because there is a clear resolve on the part of the Community, and certainly an emphatic resolve on the part of the Government, that the budget disciplines laid down should be strictly adhered to. I am glad to say that that discipline has been observed in the draft budget agreed in Luxembourg last month.

Mr. Budgen: On this important point my hon. Friend asserts that there is an emergence of political will to reform the CAP by reducing prices. Apart from the draft budget, can he point to any evidence that any of our European partners are determined to act by reducing prices?

Mr. Gow: Yes I can, because prices for most product regimes have been cut or frozen. I made that point earlier, and I am sorry that my hon. Friend was not listening at that point in my speech.

I turn now to the IGA for the 1985 budget. I share the disappointment, which has been expressed, that the Community found it necessary to ask for the extra money in 1985. However, we were satisfied that the extra money was essential, and was the irreducible minimum required to meet the Community's obligations.

The United Kingdom's gross payment under the IGA is some £250 million. That is a large sum. But about half will return to the United Kingdom in the form of receipts, and the remainder will be eligible next year for abatement under the Fontainebleau system. Our eventual net contribution will therefore be reduced from about £250 million to £40 million.

I remind the House that, without the IGA, the 1985 budget could not have included provision for our agreed £590 million abatement in respect of 1984.

I refer briefly to the intergovernmental conference set up at the Milan European Council in June. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office represented the United Kingdom at a meeting of the conference yesterday. If he should catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, he will be reporting to the House later in the debate. It is not yet clear what conclusions the conference will reach. What is clear, is that the United Kingdom's interest will be served by ratifying the own resources decision, providing for our VAT abatement, whatever those conclusions may be. No part of the own resources decision is dependent on the outcome of the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Marlow: I think that my hon. Friend will want to clear up one point. He said that we shall not be paying more than 1 per cent. VAT after rebate, but for the past four years our VAT payment after the subsequent rebate has amounted to 0·5 per cent. My hon. Friend says that it will not now be more than 1 per cent., although other people say that it will be more.

What additional benefits will we get from the EEC that we did not get when we were paying only 0·5 per cent. net of rebate?

Mr. Gow: I am sorry if my hon. Friend was not listening, but I said that the estimate for next year is 0·56 per cent.

When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister returned from the European Council at Fontainebleau she said that the agreement reached there was good for Britain and good for the Community. It has changed the status quo for the United Kingdom. Previously, we had to fight each year for refunds of our excessive net contribution. Now we have a system for automatic abatement—a system of the kind

[Mr. Gow]

which successive British Governments have striven to obtain and a system which will continue to operate unless and until the House agrees to change it.

Our position is far better than it was before Fontainebleau, far better than it might have been and far better than it would be if the new agreement were not ratified. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have fought tenaciously for the interests of the United Kingdom. The purpose of the Bill is to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the agreement that they have won. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.11 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): When the Government abandoned the Bill in the early hours of the morning of 2 July, the House was told that it was a decision to allow more time for debate. Of course, it was nothing of the sort.

The decision on 2 July was a retaliation against the humiliation of the Prime Minister at the Milan summit —a pretty feeble gesture to our European partners that the much trumpeted enthusiasm of the British Government to be the first with the new own-resources decision had been diluted by the egg that was running down the Prime Minister's face that week.

In June, the Bill was urgent, necessary, desirable and, of course, a great illustration of the magnificent negotiating skills of our revered leader. Overnight, as the great British initiative at Milan died a much-publicised death, the enthusiasm died too, and the mad dash to get ratification of the 1·4 per cent. increased ceiling on the EEC's own resources and the endorsement of yet another £250 million supplementary levy to the EEC suddenly ground to a slow, humbling crawl for cover.

It is no wonder that we were crawling and no wonder that the former Economic Secretary to the Treasury, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) has scuttled away from his regular sandbagging by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, away from the hand-on-head cross-examinations that he so rigorously faced and failed and away, at last, from the endless, shaming excuses that had to be put forward lamely each time that another unforeseen supplementary payment was required.

Of course, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North never rose to the dizzy ambitions of his successor. In January, the hon. Gentleman came to the House for a debate on the supplementary payments that are so exercising the House today. He said:

"I should like to think that supplementary budgets for the European Community would not be a thing of the future, but that would be too optimistic."—[*Official Report*, 22 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 884.]

Hon. Members will have noticed the confidence with which the Economic Secretary's successor finds it inconceivable that there will be circumstances that could drive the Government to bring back to the House yet another intergovernmental agreement. If the new Minister can carry off that trick, it will be the first year in the history of this Government that the trick has been carried off. As I shall demonstrate, all the experience in the four months that have passed since we last debated this subject shows that that will not happen.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not envisage any time at which there would be a need to increase the Community's own resources?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands me. The cross-examination is of the Government's intentions and commitments and the assurances that have been given to us today. The question is whether they are tenable or sustainable. We are not having a hypothetical debate about whether the Community will need an increase in own resources. Is the budget discipline that has been talked about previously a reality and are the Minister's assurances likely to stand up? Previous assurances have not stood up.

The new incumbent on the Treasury EEC team is the man once dubbed "Supergrass". He has been parachuted in over the recess to fill the EEC straight-man spot and he instantly becomes the EEC's Marie Antoinette as he tells the starving million in Africa to drink the rain and abandon the idea of more food aid or emergency reserves from Europe.

The Minister's predecessor was the archetypal grey man—God's own accountant, with a clueless mastery of how to mangle statistics. Now we have Bob Geldof in reverse: a Treasury Minister who can deny the evidence —seen nightly on television—of people continuing to die in the Sahel of Africa from lack of food, a Minister who can ignore all the facts that although the rains came, the seed had been eaten and had not been sown. With the arrogance and, on a day when we have a lobby by the world development movement, the indecency and insensitivity of a master at work, the Minister says that no reserve is necessary—that is what it is claimed that he said—because the rains had come and eased the famine.

We have a Minister who can lead the Common Market budget Ministers, in one of the richest conglomerations of nation states on earth, into a decision to cut food aid to Africa by 6 per cent. in real terms next year, saving a miserable £130 million in a total budget of £20 billion. I believe that the House will repudiate such an attitude.

Today of all days — the anniversary of the first showing on BBC television of the horrifying film from Ethiopia, which so galvanised and electrified our people —the Minister comes blandly to the House and does not even tell us about that decision in his account of the Budget Council. That is a mockery of what concerns the British people. This is the man who served the Prime Minister so well and is now set loose to do the same promotional job in the world at large. Even the strongest opponents of the EEC, and there are plenty of them present tonight, must wonder what the Community has done to merit the attentions of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marlow: Many of us agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said about the vast waste of money by the Community and how it could be better spent, particularly in some areas of great distress. Many of us have also read that the Labour party is to mount a massive campaign in Parliament against Government policies. With all the tragedies and the waste of money, and with the new impetus of the Labour party, why does the hon. Gentleman have only four Back-Bench colleagues behind him?

Mr. Robertson: There is a massive campaign in the country. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) should examine the real force of the arguments

and recognise that the majority of his hon. Friends are here tonight to attack the Government and not to praise them. The hon. Gentleman has to make a ritual criticism of the Labour party to save his own face at the end of the debate, but the Government are being put on the rack by their supporters and the official Opposition.

Four months ago, before the Government's conversion, the Opposition warned that the Bill was a confidence trick. We said that Britain had given up the main—indeed, the only—negotiating weapon which would bring sanity to the Community's out-of-control finances. We said that the Government had given that up in return for worthless guarantees on financial discipline; for an unwritten agreement so shot full of loopholes and exemptions as to be a recipe for the opposite of discipline. We said that it would not be long before the House was faced yet again with a demand for yet more cash to feed the black hole of a runaway EEC agriculture budget. It took less than four months for us to see, writ large, the incontestable evidence of all that we had said.

First came the 1986 draft budget from the European Commission proposing 34·9 billion ecus on a budget up 12 per cent. on what it was in 1985. That involved taking the EEC spending up to 1·35 per cent. in terms of VAT. That is just below the 1·4 per cent. ceiling that the Bill is designed to ratify. There is a gap therefore of only 900 million ecus for all contingencies in 1986.

After that came the famous Budget Council on 17 September when the new Minister of State sprang upon the EEC stage. The Budget Council cut the Commission budget by 3 billion ecus, still leaving 2·3 billion ecus above the self-imposed ceiling set by the Finance Ministers to which the Minister rather riskily referred tonight.

How were the 3 billion ecus cut from the Commission's proposals? Was it by reducing the overbearing impact of agriculture on the budget from its present level of 74 per cent. of the total? Was it by setting realistic limits on the proportion of Community funds which will be devoted to piling up surpluses and then destroying them? Of course it was not. The 20·45 billion ecus represented by agriculture guarantees were left unscathed and completely protected. Instead, the budget Ministers cut the Commission's proposals by yet again squeezing the regional and social funds.

For the first time in the EEC's history the preliminary budget proposals for increases in the social and regional funds are lower than the maximum possible rate. Only 5 per cent. is proposed instead of a potential 7·1 per cent.

After the Fontainebleau summit last year the Prime Minister said:

"With regard to regional expenditure, we hope that expenditure on the economic and social funds will take a bigger proportion of the European budget, not a lesser one as it has in the past."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1984, Vol. 62, c. 1006.]

I do not know what briefing the Prime Minister's former Parliamentary Private Secretary took with him to the Budget Council but it cannot have been based on those words uttered only a little over a year ago.

Then, the Budget Council, like Billy Bunter waiting for his postal order, made savings by postponing paying the bills for former commitments. It then disgracefully cut the proposed increases in food aid. All the fine decisions taken in Milan about transferring some of the obscene surpluses in Europe to places where people had nothing to eat; all the fine words about the needy and the starving designed to capture the public mood aroused by the film about Ethiopia a year ago, were discarded. The surpluses still mount up and the millions in Africa continue to starve.

Since June, four short months ago, when we last considered the issue, the surpluses have continued to mount. Since June, beef stocks have risen by 85,000 tonnes and now stand at 785,000 tonnes. Butter has piled up to more than 990,000 tonnes—within reach of 1 million tonnes—and stocks have increased by 150,000 tonnes since June. Another 208,000 tonnes are in private stocks on the Continent.

Skim milk powder mountains now total 500,000 tonnes and have risen by 88,000 tonnes since June. The sugar mountain contains over 2 million tonnes and has risen by almost 310,000 tonnes since June. This is when millions of people continue to starve in Africa. The surpluses continue to mount and the Minister tells the world on 17 September that no further food reserves are required.

The saving of £130 million on a budget of £20 billion is at the expense of dead children and dead people in the Sahel of Africa. That is a blight on the Minister and on the Government he serves. We in the Opposition repudiate their blindness and callousness. The Government's attitude is unworthy of the concern which was shown so vividly throughout the last year and which is displayed in all its vividness outside the House today by the huge lobby of Parliament.

At the end of the cheese-paring at the Budget Council meeting, what was the result? A comprehensive package, perhaps, for 1986; a coherent plan for the next 12 months costed within the budget discipline; a framework perhaps? Perhaps, but chance would be a fine thing.

Jean-Pierre Cot, the European Parliament Budget Committee chairman, said:

"The council is incorrigible. In 1985 it proposed a budget over 10 months and not 12. In 1986 it proposes a budget for 10 member states instead of 12."

Here is the crunch. The new budget is jammed up against the 1·4 per cent. ceiling and that is workable only if this and 11 other Parliaments allow it. It is prey to all the imponderables of demand and of the rise and fall of the dollar. The new draft budget does not take account of the cost of the accession on 1 January next year of two new member states—Spain and Portugal. That is unbelievable. With that bizarre quality to which only EEC budgets can rise, the cost of the accession has been missed out in the crucial budget discipline paraded before us. We have not a clue about what that cost will be.

We are told that 400 million ecus will have to be found if Spain and Portugal are not to be net contributors to the Community. That was pledged during negotiations on the accession.

Secondly, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker who is the Luxembourg president of the Budget Council, admitted and was quoted in *Agence Europe* on 27 September that:

"If commitments undertaken with regard to Spain and Portugal were to be fulfilled, this draft budget would have to be amended."

"Pacta sunt observanda" was his comment. The classics scholars in the Library tell me that that means that the agreement must be observed. He said that about 2·5 billion ecus was required to make up the shortfall—and that on a budget which is only 900 million ecus away from the 1·4 per cent. sound barrier. It is in the land of the funny money.

[Mr. Robertson]

I remind the House that on 10 July 1984 the Foreign Secretary said about the deal which is to be rubber stamped in this Bill, and which arises from the Fontainebleau summit:

"Let me repeat that only when Finance Ministers have adopted the necessary measures on budget discipline will the Government be prepared to recommend to the House that the own resources ceiling should be increased."—[*Official Report*, 10 July 1984; Vol. 63, c. 897.]

How do those words appear in the dazzling light of the September Budget Council and its 10-nation budget for a 12-nation Community?

One week later, the *Financial Times* had it right when, after the farm Ministers had met, it said:

"Unanimously they agreed that something needed to be done. But to a man, they disagreed as to what it should be. But the ministers did find one area of agreement — that budgetary discipline provisions restricting farm spending should not necessarily be rigidly imposed in future."

Britain's leading financial daily newspaper concludes:

"However, it was not clear whether Mr. Jopling was in the room at the time of this discussion."

The central issue of tonight's debate and of this massive, important constitutional Bill is being decided at the farm Ministers meeting. They are abandoning the budget discipline that has been trumpeted as the central feature of the Bill—and nobody knows whether the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was even in the room while they abandoned that central pillar of budgetary discipline.

Mr. Christophersen, who is the Budget Commissioner, said authoritatively;

"The Budget Ministers' discussions have resulted in more a book-keeping exercise than a real budget. The outcome is quite unsatisfactory and difficult to understand."

In the midst of all that, the Chancellor—who graced the Treasury Bench for the Minister's speech—appears to be missing the whole point, as usual. He was whistling in the wind yet again at the Tory party conference. *The Guardian* said:

"The Chancellor was in boisterous mood"—

it is rare that he is described in that way—

"boasting that he had cut where cuts were needed — in Britain's contributions to the EEC, handouts to nationalised industries and new council house building."

He was boisterously boasting about something that was not true. Net contributions to the EEC during the six years that the Prime Minister has been in office have totalled £4,245 million, an average of £708 million a year. Under the Labour Government, the average was £450 million a year. If the Chancellor is capable of being boisterous, I suggest that he picks stronger ground.

In September the *Financial Times* quotes the Chancellor on the limit of 29·6 million ecus for the 1986 budget set by Finance Ministers using the new budgetary disciplinary system for the first time as saying that it was "a very positive development in the context of budgetary discipline."

Yet by October, a month later, the Finance Ministers—including our Minister — had already exceeded the Chancellor's limit by more than 2 billion ecus. If that was in one month, what will be the position after a few more months?

This is the vivid, unquestionable truth about the so-called budget discipline. It gives the lie to the empty triumph of Fontainebleau and the very foundations of the Bill. In reality, budget discipline is now little more than a joke. As Mr. Christophersen said, it is little more than a book-keeping exercise, bloating yet again the agricultural budget and trimming the valuable, essential job of reinvigorating the European economy and getting people back to work. The deal sold to Britain at Fontainebleau is seen as a fake—a self-delusion that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary swallowed far too easily for this nation's good. On the Government's own criteria, the conditions for an increase in own resources have not been met, and will not and cannot be met.

The ludicrous boast of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart), the former Economic Secretary when he was in charge of the Treasury team quoted in *The Times* in June as

"Fontainebleau has changed the rules for good"

is seen simply for what it was—an attempt to kid only himself, and even he has now departed from the scene.

The very basis on which the Bill was laid—that it represented a good deal for Britain—is now seen to be demonstrably untrue. I call on all hon. Members on both sides of the House with the nation's interests genuinely at heart to vote against Third Reading.

6.36 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): On Second Reading I stressed that the Bill raised strong passions. Although the House is only now returning from recess, perhaps like a hospital patient recovering from anaesthetic, there is no doubt that the passions remain strong. Therefore, it is right to have this debate this evening.

I disagree strongly with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on the role of the previous Economic Secretary in our discussions. The fact is that, before the Select Committee—and, I believe, on the Floor of the House—he has been immensely helpful in seeking to clarify many highly complex issues. If it had not been for the Select Committee and the help of the former Economic Secretary and his senior officials—one in particular—it would have been difficult for the House to have the remotest idea of what was really happening.

The Select Committee had occasion to complain about the bad documentation that has been a feature of the whole affair from the so-called Fontainebleau communiqué right through the proceedings. Having said that, we should pay tribute to the presentation of the statement on the 1985 Community budget, Cmnd. 9637. Certainly the story is spelt out with great clarity. Unfortunately, it is a very sad story of a succession of positions that have steadily deteriorated. The document shows that our net contribution over the year is to be about £1,212 million —a marked contrast with the statement made by the Foreign Secretary when he placed the Bill before the House for Second Reading. He said that the figure would be half of the £1·5 billion that we would have paid had the figure remained at the 1 per cent. ceiling. That deterioration has been very marked in a matter of only a few months.

While there are obviously some exceptional circumstances—to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred in his opening speech—they clearly should have been anticipated when the Foreign Secretary made his speech suggesting that the House should give the Bill a Second Reading. Had he done so, the House might have taken a different view.

In addition to congratulating the Government on the clarity of this White Paper, congratulations are due to the draftsmen of the Bill. It has proved difficult to table amendments that seek to reassure hon. Members who have doubts about these proposals.

I do not wish to delay the House by repeating what I said on Second Reading, but I wish to refer to one point raised by my hon. Friend the Minister. It is wrong that we should be presented with a package. The Prime Minister's original position clearly was that we were being unfairly treated and that that should be rectified. To then say that we have to give something in exchange to achieve that rectification is not right. We had the case to be treated more fairly without giving any quid pro quo. My hon. Friend said that we had to increase the figure to 1·5 per cent. overall so that we could obtain a refund, but that only shows the extent to which Community finances have become out of control. It should have been possible to obtain that refund without raising the own resources ceiling. That was the position of the Government at the beginning of the negotiations.

As I said on Second Reading, my complaint is not simply about the position of the United Kingdom but about the Community as a whole, because to have raised the ceiling in the way in which we have is not desirable. The Community had a real opportunity to get the CAP under control. It has lost that opportunity by agreeing to the increase in own resources.

I interrupted the Minister earlier to ask for an assurance that the Government would not again resort to inter-governmental agreements, reimbursable advances, non-reimbursable advances or other devices, in advance of any further negotiations, to raise the ceiling from 1·4 per cent. to 1·6 per cent. My hon. Friend said that he found it impossible to envisage any situation in which the Government would wish to do that.

That was a strange remark for my hon. Friend to make. I do not see it as being impossible by any means. It is likely that things will again get out of control and that it will be necessary for further devices to be introduced. Not only may it not be impossible, but the Government may regard it as necessary. It seems highly undesirable to have a limit on own resources of 1, 1·4 or 1·6 per cent. and then, each time the limit is exceeded, top it up, going outside that limit. What is the point of having a limit on own resources if it is constantly being exceeded as the result of other negotiations? That has happened on this occasion and I was asking the Minister for an assurance that it would not happen again.

My hon. Friend declined to give that assurance, and he was unwise not to give it. It might be wise to have such an assurance on the record, and I commend that course to the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who might care to give such an assurance when he replies to the debate. Then, should matters deteriorate again, he could enter the negotiating chamber and say, "We cannot go along with that because we have given an assurance to the House of Commons not to do so." There is every reason for the Minister to give that assurance and I hope that he will give it.

In his opening remarks, the Minister of State, Treasury, referred to the whole issue of budgetary discipline. We were told that effective budgetary discipline was a condition and that unless it was met, we would not raise the own resources ceiling. As the Select Committee and the hon. Member for Hamilton pointed out, the budgetary discipline, so-called, is not likely to be effective.

It was frightening to hear the Minister say that if it did not work we should have to resort to other inter-governmental agreements. The argument becomes circular. Unless budgetary discipline will be effective, we should not undertake the Third Reading of this measure.

The common agricultural policy is tied up with the whole idea of budgetary discipline, remembering that we have been told that the agricultural budget will not go up as fast as total spending. There is no case for increasing subsidies to agriculture, and no case has been made before this House in support of the Bill in that respect. We were told that the figure was likely to go down, from over two thirds to under two thirds of Community expenditure, but the latest White Paper, published only this month, says that it is likely to be not less than two thirds but 73 per cent.

There are two other aspects of the agricultural policy that should be stressed. First, I spent some time this summer in the United States, and I am worried about the protectionist pressures that are building up there. There is no doubt that an area where the Administration there will be under great pressure, given what is happening to farming in the United States, is concern about protectionism in American agriculture, which is already heavily supported, in relation to the EC.

There is no doubt that the Bill increases the protectionism that is given to the CAP and, as a result, is likely to exacerbate the difficulties of trade negotiations between ourselves and the United States. It is important for us to resist protectionist pressures—I thought that that was common ground—and clearly those pressures are not diminished by spending more on agriculture.

The second aspect was dealt with by the hon. Member for Hamilton, and it is appropriate for us to consider it when there is a large lobby today inside and outside the House on the subject of overseas aid and agricultural surpluses. It is important for us to consider the real cost of giving assistance by way of food aid to Third world countries.

It is clear from the figures that storage costs are extremely high. The suggestion that if we got rid of stocks by shipping them to Africa it would result in our having to pay the shipping and other costs is not a good argument because we would still save money by shipping the stocks out.

The counter-argument is that, once the stocks got to Africa, somebody would have to move them on. While that may be so, it is no reason for piling up ever bigger agricultural surpluses at huge storage costs when those stocks are desperately needed elsewhere. They are doing nobody any good here, remembering that their costs in financial terms have already been met. I hope that the Government will review the position and do something to ameliorate the adverse effects that some of the consequences of the Bill will create.

In Committee I asked the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a question which he did not answer, mainly because he misunderstood the point I was making. We are overpaying this year, not in terms of the abatement but because of the way in which the timing of the payment is worked out. In Committee, the Minister replied in terms of the abatement. We are overpaying and are due a refund. I asked what guarantee existed that we would get that refund. I also asked whether we would

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receive interest for paying earlier than we were supposed to pay. Will he give that information tonight? And when does he expect to have to return to the House to ask for the 1·4 per cent. increase in the VAT figure to be raised yet again?

6.48 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) has been critical and some of his criticisms have merit, but I believe that the Government and other members of the Community—and let us not forget them—deserve credit for achieving this agreement. The points made at the outset by the Minister about the difference in our contribution are facts that cannot be denied or lightly set aside.

I say that despite the fact that I still profoundly disagree with the style that the Government felt it was necessary to adopt in the negotiations. They could have adopted a more reasonable stance and obtained the same result. I am certain that that has caused long-term damage to this country's capacity to exert constructive influence in the councils of the Community. It has left many scars, as I dare say the Minister, who is new to this responsibility, is finding out.

The Minister concentrated exclusively—not so the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)—on the British position, and in doing so he followed the pattern of his predecessors. That was bad because his predecessors were also wrong to approach the matter in that way. If the Community is to be examined in this House simply and exclusively—as is the case with anti-marketeers—in terms of its direct effect on this country, rather than in terms of evolving a structure of which we are a part and which is seen by all participants as being not only competently managed but fair in operation, the Community will not work.

The hon. Member for Hamilton referred, rightly and properly, to enlargement. I can remember saying in the Chamber previously during debates on enlargement that if the process was to work, our political enthusiasm for it in the aftermath of dictatorships in Spain and Portugal would have to be matched by financial generosity.

Spain and Portugal are normally lumped together and it can be argued that that was a mistake in the enlargement negotiations and that it might have been better if the two countries had been dealt with separately. It must be recognised that they are very different. Spain is quite a large economy while Portugal is the poorest country in Europe by some measure. I agree with the hon. Member for Hamilton that it is monstrous that it should end up as a net contributor. As the right hon. Member for Worthing said, we are dealing with a Community issue in which we are all involved. Therefore, we should be expressing our concern about Portugal's position. If we are seized of the reality, it must surely mock any of the ideals of economic convergence which inspired the Community's founding fathers.

Ministers say repeatedly that the United Kingdom is a good Community member. That is trotted out in debate after debate. It seems that they fail to understand that if any collective organisation is to work it is necessary to show an interest in the problems of others as well as those that face us directly. That applies all the more, and not least in the case of Portugal, when the others are much less well off than ourselves.

I understood and sympathised with the remarks of the hon. Member for Hamilton about the Community's failure, despite its considerable food surpluses, to respond to the famine in central Africa. It has to be appreciated, despite the remarks of the right hon. Member for Worthing, that it is pretty likely that if considerable allocations were made from the surpluses for the purpose of famine relief, the result would be an on cost for the Community. It is doubtful whether saved storage costs could be set against new transport costs. The reality is that such allocations would probably require some supplementary estimates. When the Labour party was last in government I did not perceive any evidence that it would have been willing to have advocated such a course, as the hon. Member for Hamilton appeared to do. I do not believe that it would have done so if it had been faced with comparable circumstances.

This is not the occasion to dilate on the common agricultural policy. There is a large area of agreement about the CAP, although sometimes one would not guess that, between those who are in favour of the Community and those who are opposed to it. Believe it or believe it not, those of us who are, like myself, much in favour of the Community agree entirely that there is a necessity to exercise discipline and control and to stop the policy expanding endlessly, which it appears to be doing.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Tell us how that is done.

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), whose dulcet tones I have heard so often in debates on this subject, would bide his whisht for a second, if I may use a Scotticism, it was always a mirage to imagine that that discipline and control could suddenly be exercised. Anyone who knows anything about agriculture knows that nothing significant can be done in less than four or five years to change direction.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): So we shall still go on paying?

Sir Russell Johnston: I make the assertion and leave it at that. It is a mistake to imagine that movement could be introduced instantly. Also, some hon. Members appear totally to ignore any of the consequences for rural populations that would follow such a change in direction. It appears sometimes that they are entirely indifferent.

Mr. Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that when the Liberal party repealed the Corn Laws there was great prosperity in the countryside four years afterwards?

Sir Russell Johnston: I fear that if I engaged in a prolonged historical dissertation with the hon. Gentleman I should probably be ruled out of order, and for that I would be grateful.

I understand that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is to reply. We have been led to understand by the remarks of the Minister of State, Treasury that he will deal with the Luxembourg summit. I hope sincerely that the Minister will be able to tell us that the British Government are not taking a lambent position in the negotiations and are not merely waiting for someone else to make proposals so that they can consider whether

they are reasonable or unreasonable. That would be no way for the United Kingdom to behave. It has been said by Conservative Ministers on many occasions that Britain will take a lead in the European Community. We have an opportunity to do so and I hope that we shall propose constructive reforms instead of merely responding to the proposals of others.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), the Minister of State, Treasury, on his new appointment. I take some comfort from the fact that he is now to be at the helm of our financial affairs in Europe. That is not entirely because of what he said this afternoon but because of my happy memories of his pre-ministerial days as a Back Bencher, when he always displayed a vigorous and healthy scepticism of public expenditure at home and abroad. I hope that he will live up to those youthful ideals. I must warn him that one of the matters which concern some of us is that there seems to be a degree of belt-tightening at home in areas of expenditure which are dear to our constituents and by no means such a disciplined attitude to expenditure on the EEC. I hope that my hon. Friend will not turn out to be the equivalent of a puritan at home and, in financial terms, a libertine abroad. I wish my hon. Friend well in his new appointment.

When our proceedings broke up in some disarray on the night of 1 July, I was the last Back-Bencher to be called before Progress was reported. I warned then that we seemed, in EEC expenditure terms, to be at a level of 1·35 per cent. of own resources and perilously close to the limits which we were then debating. I said that those of us issuing warnings saw that we were heading towards breaking the level of 1·4 per cent., and I predicted that we were shortly to be joined by a new and powerful ally, which might be described as the march of events.

In the ensuing months, events have more than justified the point of view so eloquently expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and others. We are witnessing the failure to achieve adequate budgetary discipline in the EEC. Let us not forget that it is a fundamental condition of the Bill that effective budgetary discipline should be imposed in the EEC. The twin pillars of the debate are abatement and budgetary discipline. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 5 December 1984:

> "All of them have, however, agreed that the Council, which is the deciding unit in the whole Community, shall be bound by the clause on financial budgetary discipline.—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 354.]

The picture of budgetary discipline in the EEC over the past few months is far from satisfactory.

Last year's EEC farm budget breached its ceiling of 16·5 billion ecu by 11 per cent. The total overspend of 1·8 billion ecu would have been 900 million ecu higher had not the strong dollar last autumn created savings in the sum allocated to cover export subsidies for cereals. On putting last year's EEC farm expenditure under the microscope, one must conclude, first, how vulnerable it is to dollar fluctuations. Every time the dollar slips one point against the ecu, it costs the EEC budget approximately £60 million. The dollar has slipped several points since the budgetary assumption for 1966 was fixed at $1 = 1·2 ecu. Secondly, one must conclude just how disastrous to budgetary forecasting and discipline are the effects of unsold surpluses. Merely storing the EEC beef mountain costs 2·7 billion ecu—an increase of 700 million ecu.

This brings me to the ultimate madness of CAP—the growing and mounting surpluses. The EEC has 14 million tonnes of grain, 800,000 tonnes of beef, 1 million tonnes of butter, 427 million tonnes of milk powder and 2 billion litres of wine in store, and all are increasing.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend is understating his case. According to *The Times* on 16 July—just before the new cereal harvest—20 million tonnes of EEC cereals in stock remained unsold.

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps a cheap Soviet side deal changed the figures. Either way, it is highly unsatisfactory.

Fifty per cent. of the EEC's entire budget now goes on the storing, distribution or dumping of these food surpluses. As the problem mounts, the EEC Commission is becoming increasingly desperate and is resorting to crazier and crazier measures. The Commission has announced that, in order to dispose of the butter mountain, it will feed a large part of the butter surplus back to the cattle that originally produced it. What nonsense. We have heard of jobs for the boys; now we have butter for the cows. Marie Antoinette, where are you now? The phrase which was said to have started the French Revolution—"Let the peasants eat cake"—has been replaced with "Let the poor people in Africa starve while the EEC cows eat butter." The only result of budgetary discipline so far is that the smack of firm government has been used to drive cattle towards the butter trough. That is nonsense.

The butter situation is only the tip of a massive surpluses iceberg which is building up problems for the ideal of budgetary discipline. The cold storage space for beef in Europe is so full that the Commission has had to hire additional cold stores in Austria, Switzerland and other countries. Ships with cold storage space have had to be chartered in France and Italy. Beef is pouring into the intervention stores at a rate of 25,000 tonnes a week because of a recent decision to extend intervention of beef carcases. Even with an expected sale of 75,000 tonnes of surplus beef to the Soviet Union, the EEC will still have a beef surplus of well over 1 million tonnes by the end of the year, at enormous cost.

Other factors make budgetary discipline in the EEC increasingly impossible to achieve. An item in *The Sunday Times* on 5 October, which was headed "EEC's £600m fraud", began:

> "The official auditors to the common market have uncovered evidence of wholesale fraud in the trade of farm produce. Exporters are claiming millions of pounds in subsidies for food which in many cases does not exist."

The article gave some examples, stating:

> "Northern Irish farmers were sending the same cattle across the border so frequently that, in the words of one customs official, 'the cattle knew the way themselves'."

The article continued:

> "The European Commission . . . 'could not confirm or deny' an . . . estimate that the irregularities account for more than 10 per cent. of the £6 billion spent on export refunds each year, because it 'does not have the information'."

I turn now to the 1986 budget which so far has had several different manifestations. Originally Ministers set a ceiling of 29 billion ecu, or £17 billion. The Commission then produced a draft budget of 35 billion ecu, or £20 billion. In September EEC Ministers, attempting

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budgetary discipline, set a budget of 32 billion ecu, or £18·4 billion. Those levels which, however one looks at them, amount to increases of between 8 per cent. and 17 per cent. over the July ceiling were achieved not by the desirable objective of cutting agricultural spending but by accountants' conjuring tricks or creative book-keeping.

I can do no better than quote Mr. Jean-Pierre Cot, the chairman of the European Assembly's Committee on Budgets, who said:

"The Council of Ministers is incorrigible. In 1985 they proposed a budget for 10 months instead of for 12 months. Now for 1986 they are proposing a budget for 10 member states instead of 12 member states."

A furious row about the future budgetary treatment of Spain and Portugal is emerging. Those countries expected to be beneficiaries in their first year, but instead they are turning out to be contributors. We seemed to be assuring them that, because of the desirable ideal of strengthening democracies, they would be helped financially. Instead, for them it is more a case of pay up, pay up and pay the game. I believe that a dangerous political backlash will emerge in those countries when it is discovered how they will be treated under these proposed budgetary arrangements. Spain and Portugal will have to contribute 3·3 billion ecu under this budget.

There have also been cuts—to many observers these are unacceptable — in the social and regional funds, instead of cuts in agricultural subsidies. Perhaps the complete freeze on food aid to Third world countries is the most unacceptable budget policy of all. The motto seems to be, "Let us go on enriching the grain barons but do not feed the hungry and starving of Africa." This is morally unacceptable.

A sorry picture emerges on this crucial issue of budgetary discipline. What a bleak outlook for sound accounting. When we discussed this matter in July, the rising cost of the budget had pushed the EEC's level of expenditure up to 1·35 per cent. of own resources — perilously close to the 1·4 per cent. limit which we are supposed to be authorising in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, said that he thought that it was impossible that we would soon be considering this issue again, but I think that it is almost certain that we shall be back regretting that we did not take a stand with this Bill at the 1 per cent. level so that we have to fight against a 1·4 per cent. increase. It seems like an annual Christmas pantomime. In comes Buttons, the Foreign Secretary, asking us all to clap our hands and show that we believe in the good fairy, Tinkerbell, who represents the good fairy of effective budgetary discipline in the EEC.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): That is the way to do it.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman, with his previous career in show business, knows exactly how to clap at the right time when one is asked to believe in fairies. He would have us all walk through the Division Lobbies saying that it is now time for Mother Goose to lay a golden egg worth £1 billion or more to the EEC. Mother Goose, instead of living at No. 10 Downing street, will be at No. 10.4, No. 10.6 or No. 10.8 Downing street.

Mr. Budgen: Each teeny weeny bit.

Mr. Aitken: Let us get away from the pantomime and return to reality. We must force effective budgetary discipline, as the Bill does. By holding the 1 per cent. limit we have missed our chance to reform the CAP. We cannot continue with this madness, which is offensive to the Third world and bad for the consumer who, it is estimated, will have to pay an extra £7 a week from the family budget for these extravagant CAP surpluses. Sooner or later the public's patience will crack and they will say, "This dance will go no further." Although some of us are saying this with our votes, it is a great pity that we are not all saying it in this debate. .

7.9 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham North-East): I come as hon. Members will be aware, from the London borough of Newham. There we are asking the Government for partnership status, which might give us an extra £10 million a year to ameliorate the bleak conditions of our inner city. So far, the Government are resisting. They seem to be saying to us that they do not have the money. They do not have the money for British inner cities, yet they seem to have hundreds and hundreds of millions of pounds to throw down the black hole of the Common Market. They are throwing good money after bad. I find that unacceptable.

What we are doing in the Bill is the opposite of what we should be doing. Against the background of agricultural surpluses, as the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said, there is no case for any increase in agricultural expenditure. Increasing the VAT contribution by 40 per cent. will only encourage further overproduction, and then 1·4 per cent. will not be enough.

In the Bill we are throwing away one of the few cards that we held. We are abandoning the only limit that we had on the lunacy of the common agricultural policy. That was the 1 per cent. VAT limit. We were told that a condition of agreeing this increase was the obtaining of financial discipline. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked many questions about that. We were told that before we agreed there would be a watertight arrangement for financial discipline. That has not been achieved, and no one can say that it has. There is nothing legally binding. There is nothing in any treaty.

Why not? The Prime Minister explained that to us on 5 December 1984 when she said:

"It is not being embodied in a treaty or technically — legally—into the budgetary process. . . . Because one simply cannot get agreement from all 10 countries." — [*Official Report*, 5 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 354.]

There we are. That says it all.

The so-called guidelines arrived at at Fontainebleau are in my view completely worthless. The new Minister will discover that as he goes along. I note that he did not give any guarantees to the House this evening. The agreement is full of phrases, as he is aware, such as "exceptional circumstances" and "barring aberrant developments" and all the rest. As he will soon find, the Common Market is an aberrant development.

If there were budget discipline, we should not need the Bill or any increased spending. We were told that we had to agree to the increase to get our rebate. What is that rebate? It is a percentage of our own money coming back. Before, rebates were unconditional. This rebate is conditional on us agreeing that we shall pay even higher taxes to the EEC. In other words, we are paying for our own rebate plus some extra. As everyone should be aware, we shall be paying more in net terms than we were before.

According to the Treasury—it admitted that in 1985 —we shall contribute an astonishing figure of £1·2 billion net. I have been speaking this evening to some of the people who came to lobby the House about British aid to the Third world. I wonder what they think when they hear that we give virtually twice as much to subsidise the richest countries in Western Europe as we give to the Third world. I do not believe that that makes any sense.

What is that money for? Why should we pay anything in net terms? After all, we are one of the poorest members of the Common Market. Why should we pay anything? Why should we subsidise our richer neighbours, many of whom pay nothing in net terms and yet draw benefit? Why should we pay more than anyone else? I have never had that explained satisfactorily. What do we get for the money? What special benefits do we receive that others do not? Why should we spend £1 billion to obtain what they get for nothing? The House should ask those questions because we are supposed to be the custodians of the taxpayers' interests. If Newham cannot have £10 million, before we have a riot, why should we give those huge sums to the Common Market?

We should also ask how long the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling will last, because the effective VAT rate for 1984 and 1985 was well over 1 per cent. That is why the difference was made up in the intergovernmental agreement—the so-called intergovernmental whipround. In 1986, the EEC will already be spending 1·35 per cent. In other words, expenditure will already be bumping along the ceiling. Is it not clear that the life expectancy of the 1·4 per cent. ceiling will not be long? Then, because the Government propose to sell the pass now unless the House can stop them, we shall be asked to pay even more. What are we spending that money for? We should be clear that it is for the indefensible common agricultural policy. There have been no changes in the common agricultural policy. It continues to increase production, which results in uncontrolled rises in expenditure. Food prices are divorced from any economic criteria. They are political prices, not economic ones.

Income support for the smaller or less efficient farmers is guaranteed by fixing high consumer prices and keeping out and penalising products from overseas, regardless of the disruptive effect on poorer Third world countries. Prices high enough to keep less efficient farms in being mean excessive profits — a bonanza — for the large producers, while not even ensuring a reasonable income for the smaller ones. Moreover, those artificial prices have stimulated over-production and resulted in huge surpluses that cannot be absorbed. The open-ended commitment to buy into intervention links subsidies to production. In other words, those who produce most benefit most.

As taxpayers, we pay to produce what, as consumers, we cannot afford to buy. The burden of agricultural support is placed upon the consumer. That discourages consumption. It penalises the poorest in our society because they spend more of their income on food. It has even more damaging effects. It gives incentives to expand production through capital investment and the costly input of energy and fertiliser. That pushes even the large farmer into an economic trap due to the high costs of his overheads and because of rising land prices. Even he finds that his future is mortgaged and fears that the bubble will burst, as eventually and inevitably it will.

Such a policy threatens our environment and the quality of the soil. It encourages intensive monoculture systems of farming and the amalgamation of farms, the grubbing-up of hedges and woodlands and the massive injection of chemicals and fertilisers into the land. Those surpluses have further to be subsidised and sold abroad at a loss, disrupting the economies of our friends overseas and some of the poorest developing countries. Furthermore, that crazy price support mechanism is the opposite of an instrument for social or regional policy. It works to the advantage of the largest and the well-to-do producers who are to be found primarily in the north of Europe, where heavily supported products such as cereals, milk and sugar are produced.

It is an astonishing fact that farm incomes in the five most prosperous regions of the EEC are nearly seven times more than the average farm incomes of the five poorest regions. These disparities are growing wider every year so this public money is going to richer farmers, not poorer.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Member concede, in developing this point, that this position is very likely to change because if we allow Spain and Portugal to come into the Community and the political balance shifts towards the south, we may find that the available money under either a 1 per cent. or a 1·4 per cent. ceiling will go increasingly to the southern producers and not ours? That development would reverse the trend that he has described. He might also care to think about the effect it would have on our own people here, farmers and others.

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Member is well known in the House for his expertise on these matters and what he says may well be true. Were that to be the case, it would mean a lot more money. We would have to go well above 1·4 and 1·6 per cent. We would have to be taxed more highly in order to give even greater subsidies.

Producers' co-responsibility, quotas or levies are not a solution, mainly because they envisage no reduction in prices, which would still provide the present stimulus to over-production. Again, the rigidities and the unfairnesses that they would cause would lead to constant presure for their removal or their increase. Crucially, whilst prices are fixed politically, there would be irresistible demands from farmers for prices to be raised to compensate them for reduced production.

By not allowing demand to regulate or at least influence supply, we have a huge waste of economic resources. Because of an open-ended commitment to buy in whatever is produced, the whole system is out of control. This is why agriculture consistently swallows the vast bulk of the budget. The proportion of the budget going into agriculture has gone up again; I think that the Minister of State will admit that it is now running at a rate of 73 per cent. Not only is there no market discipline, there is no budgetary discipline, because agricultural spending alone is classified as compulsory. It is demand-led. All the rest —social, regional, industrial policy—competes for any crumbs left.

Mr. Marlow The hon. Gentleman has just made a point that agriculture expenditure is going to take 73 per cent. of the budget. He will know that way back in 1977 agriculture took 73 per cent. of the Community's budget. It was a much smaller budget in those days but we were told then that salvation was just around the corner, that there would be new policies, restraints and controls and that everything would be all right. It was not right then. Why is it going to be right now?

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Member has put his finger on a very valid point. This is one of the causes of our frustration. We listened to the new Minister being very optimistic. When we asked him to give a guarantee, he did not do so because I think he knows in his heart that there is no guarantee.

When will the House learn? Are we ever going to learn? When will the Conservative Whips' Office learn, when the Minister says that it will be decided by the House? Perhaps that is really the question that we have to ask. Nevertheless the Government tonight are asking the House to throw even more money into this crazy system which is so damaging to British interests, when I believe and, I think, hon. Members on the Government Benches believe, that we should be doing precisely the opposite.

Agriculture and food policy should be repatriated and brought once again under the control of the House. We should set prices that would bring demand and supply together, prices rather nearer to world levels. We should once again open our ports to efficiently produced food from the Commonwealth and from the prairie countries. If we wished, as I am sure we would, to give income support to our farming community, it should be done directly rather than by artificially high consumer prices. Such a sensible policy would be in the interests of Britain, in the interests of poorer people and in the interests of world trade. It is long overdue and we should begin its introduction as soon as possible.

7.25 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I oppose this Bill because it is bad for Britain. What it means is that we will have to spend more money. Our net contribution will increase and we shall have to spend more money gross for exactly the same mish-mash that we have had in the past. I oppose the Bill because it is un-Conservative, because it means more public expenditure — and less adequately controlled expenditure at that. Public expenditure which was controlled by this House will now be in the hands of the Commission in Brussels. Money which we would have spent will be spent elsewhere by people in whom no Member of this House has faith when it comes to spending the money wisely, efficiently, without fraud and without waste.

The Bill is of course of benefit to some. Some people will welcome it — the "Europeans", that very small minority which wants to see a United States of Europe by stealth.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Just a lunatic fringe.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend says, "The lunatic fringe". I was about to say, "European Assembly". I leave it to hon. Members to decide for themselves whether the two are compatible. The Spinellis, the people who want European union, will be in favour of this; it will be moving in their direction. The ratchet will be moving slowly towards European unity—the Dooge report, the people who want to see the gradual achievement of a homogeneous judicial area, the same laws throughout the Community, the promotion of common cultural values, the same culture throughout the Community, the development of new media in a Europewide context, a European broadcasting corporation. How will that be financed? Through the VAT contribution? Or are we to have another licence fee?

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree and is he not reassured by the fact that one of the joint budgetary authorities in the Community is the directly elected European Parliament? Is he not confident that the elected members of that body will join in exercising strict budgetary control over future Community budgets?

Mr. Marlow: I wonder whether my hon. Friend is so confident? He has spent some time there. It is my view — I do not know whether he will agree — that the members of the European Assembly would like to increase European competence and dominance. They would like to increase European policies over which they have control. Basically what they wish to do is to increase European expenditure. It gives more power to bureaucracy and less power to democracy. It allows——

Sir Russell Johnston: I give way frequently to the hon. Gentleman, so he must allow me a little pleasure as well. He cannot jump in this illogical fashion from, at one moment, condemning the European Parliament on the ground that it takes the sort of decisions he does not like to saying that, of course, all this means an increase in bureaucracy and a reduction in democracy. He cannot have it both ways—although he almost always tries to.

Mr. Marlow: The European Parliament is not a legislature; it does not have legislative powers or functions. It is an assembly. When we discuss in the House treaties or documents dealing with it, it is always called the European Assembly.

The European Assembly is for ever trying to increase its powers and competence. It is not a legislature, nor a parliament; it is a lobby and that is the problem. The European Assembly wants to spend public money that it does not earn itself, just as Liverpool wants to spend public money that it does not earn itself.

May I trouble the House very briefly with a private address to my friendly neighbourhood Whip? I shall be voting against this nonsense tonight. I am second to none in my admiration for the Prime Minister — *[Interruption.]*—if my hon. Friend will listen—because nobody could have negotiated on this issue a better deal than she did. She was dealt an appalling hand by her predecessors. The Government were in a difficult position. Nobody can negotiate as effectively and efficiently as the Prime Minister. Nobody bats for Britain as well as she does. On this issue, she has done as good a job as possible. For example, our future rebates will be by abatement rather than other people being allowed to discuss, decide and deliver what is in effect our money.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is not that illogical, as was a previous point made in an intervention? My hon. Friend says that the Prime Minister has done the best possible negotiating job. She has wholeheartedly, unequivocally and without exception or exclusion recommended the intergovernmental agreement and the legislation to the House. Therefore, why cannot my hon. Friend, logically and directly connecting the two concepts, vote for the Bill?

Mr. Marlow: I am pleased that I gave way to my hon. Friend because I enjoyed the courtesy of doing so, but in a way I am sorry because I was proposing to answer the question before he asked it. We are not the Prime Minister. We are the House of Commons of England — [HON. MEMBERS: "Of Britain."] We are Parliament. The Prime

Minister is in a specific personal position. She negotiates with other Prime Ministers in the EEC. She has to deal with those Prime Ministers on a day-to-day basis. There is a limit to how far she can press an argument, whereas we in Parliament do not have to take the same direct view as the Prime Minister. If we as Parliament believe that by withholding our agreement from the measure we can secure a better deal for Britain, that is possible. We are in a different position from the Prime Minister. We have different powers and a different relationship with the Community. We have a different job to do.

If we vote against the measure tonight — [HON. MEMBERS: "When."] When some of us vote against the measure tonight, I hope that there will be a sufficient number of people here to defeat it. The immediate effect would be no increase in Community own resources. Europe, like Liverpool, would be rate-capped. If rate capping is good for Liverpool, why is it not good for Brussels? For the first time Europe would be required to live within its means. It would have to restrain waste on existing policies.

We talk a lot about our net contribution and what will happen to it. However, we must not lose sight of the gross contribution. The United Kingdom's gross contribution to the European Community went up by 50 per cent. in the three years from 1981 to 1984. As far as I know, the policies run, administered and decided by the Community have been much the same over that period yet we are paying 50 per cent. more. It must be grossly, crassly inefficient. If we denied more money, that waste would have to be tackled at source.

If we restrained the Community's expenditure by not voting for the Bill, it would not be able to embark on new money-based policies. There is a great vested interest; there is a lobby; there is a machine; there is an engine of Europeanisation in Brussels. The Commission proposes policies. It wants to see the influence and interests of Europe expanded. So does the European Assembly. A ceiling on expenditure would restrict the number of money-based policies that can emanate from Brussels.

There is much that we want to do with our partners and friends in Europe. There are barriers to trade that we want to break down. There is bureaucracy that we want to cut. However, none of that will cost money. If we increase the resources available to the Community, people will think of expensive policies additional to the existing ones and in some cases additional to the policies that we operate in this country — more policies, more laws, more public expenditure. Those are reasons for imposing a ceiling.

As I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), in 1977 the common agricultural policy accounted for 73 per cent. of the Community budget. Now, after years of being told that the matter was being gripped and would be sorted out, and that the obscenities of the surpluses would be dealt with, Community expenditure on agriculture has doubled. That has happened in the past four years. Since 1977 it must have trebled or quadrupled. Now we are still spending 73 per cent. of the Community budget on agricultural policy.

Various undertakings have been given, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has said, if it rains on a Wednesday afternoon those undertakings cannot be met. Some 15 or 20 years ago Professor Mansholt had a plan for reducing Community expenditure on agriculture and making it more effective and efficient. What happened to that? What happened to all the plans and promises, all the commitments that have been given in the past? They have all been swept aside by the lobbies, the vested interests and the political realities in some of our European neighbours' countries. That is what will happen now because we have not put a cap on the CAP because we have not put a ceiling on Community expenditure.

If we give way once, the lesson is there — we have given in and we shall give way again. We have heard all the talk about it being up to the House and expenditure not being increased again unless the House wants it. We know what happens with a Government with a massive majority, and an effective and pleasant Whips' office. If the Government say that, because they have given a commitment on the other side of the channel, Community expenditure will be increased, they can deliver. Barely half a dozen hon. Members begin to understand the Community financing system. I do not include myself in that number, and I take an interest in the issue. If the Government ask for more money, is it possible or likely that the House of Commons will act as a restraint on the Government's decision?

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Given my hon. Friend's stated admiration for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, does he seriously believe that she and the Government as a whole would at any stage wish to make to the House any recommendation involving increased expenditure unless they were entirely convinced that it was in the national interest of the United Kingdom to do so?

Mr. Marlow: I respect the Prime Minister, and I understand what my hon. Friend says. My hon. Friend's predecessor was asked whether the Government would give an undertaking that they would not ask for another intergovernmental agreement. He did not give that undertaking. The reason was that the Community is a system of barter. If one wants a sensible policy on reducing non-tariff barriers and on freedom for the City of London to trade insurance policies in Germany, Paris and so on, one must scratch the other person's back too. Because of that, the Minister could not give a commitment from the Dispatch Box that he would not come back for more money. The Prime Minister is part of it. She cannot help it. It is part of the institution of which she is a member as Prime Minister.

That does not mean that we here in Parliament have to take the same view. I shall be interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister of State says at the end of the debate. I still do not understand why the Government cannot give the commitment that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) requested in his excellent speech, that we shall not give a loan or agree to distend this excessive expenditure further.

People might say that if we were to throw out the measure there would be massive retaliation from our partners in Europe, life would become unbearable, we would not get any rebates in future and so on. That cannot be true. When we joined the Community we had a balance of payments balance with the Community. This year, on the latest figures, we expect to have a deficit of £9,000 million in manufactured trade with the Community. We are a massive market for the industries of continental Europe. We buy their foodstuffs to a greater extent than

[Mr. Marlow]

they buy ours. We are a market for their food and manufactures. Even at a lower level of financial net contribution to the EEC, we would still be a net payer. Europe with us is more powerful politically and in foreign policy than Europe without us. We have a massively strong position and if my dream were to come true and we were to defeat this measure tonight, there is nothing Europe could do which would be against our interests. We are in a stronger bargaining position than we give in account of ourselves.

There are several myths, too, which ought to be dispatched. First, there is the myth that if we did not have this agreement we would have to pay more. After this agreement we will be paying more net than we were paying before the agreement, and it is not conceivable that whatever we do we would not have an agreement. Let us try to compare apples with apples and not apples with oranges. We are worse off now than we were before the agreement, and to say if we did not have an agreement we would be worse off is really a weak, shallow and shabby argument and it does nobody any credit to use that argument.

Secondly, under the new arrangements we will be paying less than 1 per cent. VAT. As I said in an intervention in the speech of the Minister, over the past four years we have paid an average of 0·5 per cent. My hon. Friend came back as quick as a flash and said, "But next year we shall be paying only 0·56 per cent." My hon. Friend knows that we shall be paying 0·56 per cent. next year because of our massive payment this year which will entitle us to this exceptionally large rebate next year. However, the likelihood is that we will get it up to that 1 per cent. so that we will be paying more net after rebate —almost twice as much more—than in the past. Let us not be political about everything and try to disguise everything. Let us state the facts and show things as they are, warts and all.

As I have said many times before, we all want to control and reorganise the CAP. It is a policy which might suit continental farmers, but it is not a particularly good policy for our farmers. However, continental farmers have the votes, so they persist in it and we persist in paying for it. As I said, this is good for the Europeans, good for those who want a national Europe, a European state, but that is not what the people of this country want and that is not what the people of this country have been told they will get. But drip, drip, slowly, slowly, we are moving towards a European state, and this measure moves us a step further in that direction.

The Bill is bad for Parliament. We are losing control over people's money and giving that control to non-elected bureaucrats. It is bad for Britain. We are trying to deal with the problems of big, nationalised organisations which are answerable to nobody, yet here we are passing money to an organisation which is not directly answerable to anybody. It is also bad for Europe. What we want in Europe is mutual deregulation, we want free trade, and we want to cut out bureaucracy. We do not want new, expensive policies. We do not want to feed the appetites of the bureaucrats, and that is what this measure will do.

7.35 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This Bill is about money and about power. It is about the transfer of money and therefore about the transfer of power. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) spoke last from the Labour side and I commend his speech to the House. He mentioned the people of the area we represent. They do not have much money and they do not have much power. The Government have power to provide money for the economy and that will provide young people in that borough with jobs. They should do that instead of voting it away from the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend also mentioned that we have a massive lobby, concerned not with domestic affairs, grievous though they are, particularly for young people, but for those in some parts of the world who cannot even expect to live. The Government have the power to provide resources and money to prevent famine and starvation. Instead, at the express behest of the Prime Minister through the Rayner cuts, the scientific units of the Overseas Development Administration were butchered. Select Committees have asked for those cuts to be reversed but they have not been. The Government are providing neither the money nor the power even to do what the Prime Minister claims the country is trying to do in respect of the prevention of famine.

Mentioning the Prime Minister brings me to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), whom I welcome to this debate on the EC. He is going to find a certain degree of difficulty—even, if I may suggest, greater difficulty than is inevitable for almost anybody in housing. He illustrated that himself, perhaps unwittingly, when he was interrupted by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and the Civil Service and he could not give an undertaking. If I remember his words correctly, and I do not want to do him down, he said, "I cannot conceive of circumstances where it would be necessary."

The hon. Gentleman has a lot to learn about EC affairs because I suggest to him that this Bill illustrates in both its clauses those very circumstances that he claims he could not conceive of. The first part of clause 1 deals with the new arrangements for own resources and the second part, sub-paragraph *(f)*, deals with the undertaking irregularly to top up the EC budget for 1985 because those own new resources are not yet ratified in the vote. It is flowery and eloquent to talk about not conceiving the circumstances. He did not understand that those very circumstances are with us at this minute in debating the Third Reading of this Bill.

This brings me to paragraph 1*(f)* itself. It relates to this intergovernmental agreement, at which is presumably an international treaty because it has been added to the terms of the European Communities Act 1972 and its terms are set out in Cmnd. 9548 on one page. It refers to an undertaking. I have attempted to identify the nature of this international agreement, at which Ministers were present, who appended the signatures and so on. All that the Library and the Minister could provide was a rather scrappy piece of paper which relates to Ministers meeting within the Council and idly agreeing to put hundreds of millions of pounds of taxation on their respective constituents in European countries.

That might just be legal. I understand that if the Command Paper tells us it is a treaty we have to accept it. The Ministers themselves might look at those procedures a little more carefully, but let us say that that is just legal. I doubt very much whether it is legal in terms of the treaty of Rome, because as we all know, that treaty

says the Community must keep within its own resources. As was pointed out in the earlier Committee debates, paragraph 1*(f)* is highly unlikely to be fully legal. It may indeed be ultra vires and it is demeaning this House to put such a proposal before it on Third Reading.

Paragraph 1*(e)* is the decision, the Fontainebleau package, the 1·4 per cent. VAT increase. I should like to reiterate something which ought to be reiterated time and time again, that it is not 1·4 per cent. of VAT, it is not 1·4 per cent. of the 15 per cent. nor is it 1·4 per cent. of the VAT take. That well-known newspaper *The Times* seemed to reiterate this on 24 June 1985 in an article which said:

"At the moment it can claim a maximum of 1 per cent. of this VAT revenue."

That was an article in *The Times* written by a gentleman called Ian Murray. Of course, that is not correct: it is 1 per cent. of the VAT base which is equivalent to a rateable value assigned to us, and of course we are now paying about 11 per cent. of that take from VAT. Any Chancellor —it might even be the hon. Member for Eastbourne or perhaps even the right hon. Member for Worthing—in future would have to pay upwards of 11 per cent. and perhaps more if sterling drops or the 1·4 per cent. goes up, at least 11 per cent. and perhaps up to 15 per cent. of the VAT take straight to Brussels. Do not pass Go; do not pass Whitehall; do not pass the Treasury; do not even pass Parliament because it is paid out of the Consolidated Fund under the 1972 European Communities Act without even leave of the statutory instrument. That will be the position of any future Chancellor so long as the legislation remains in force.

Finance is power and the transfer of power weakens the giver. By this legislation the Chancellor's hand will be weakened in relation to the poor and needy in Newham as much as to the poor and needy in Africa. Thus will the power of any future Government be constrained. Their life blood—their taxation powers—will be less than would otherwise be the case because it will automatically be siphoned off, away from these shores.

There is, of course, the rebate, but it is not two thirds of the VAT share. We have been told how difficult it is to express clearly, but it is two thirds of the gap between what our share would be if we paid the full VAT rate, whatever it might be, and what we get back as a proportion of Community expenditure. We must not forget, however, that what we receive consists not just of grants for visible projects such as roads and for regional projects or youth projects but of all the allocated expenditure. That, of course, includes all the common agricultural policy expenditure to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) referred, because that, too, is "money for Britain", so the more money that is poured into the agricultural industries and the agriculture support industries of this country the smaller the gap, and therefore the rebate, becomes. In other words, the more that is spent on inappropriate support the smaller will be the rebate in relation to which the Minister so proudly proclaims the Government's success.

The Minister's predecessor said in Committee that the Government would try to present all these complex calculations as clearly as possible. The Commission has been given competence to do the calculations but the Government, we are told, will monitor them. The Government, however, have no power to change them. The Council of Ministers also has no such power. That power rests entirely in the hands of the Commission. The Minister's predecessor said:

"The Government will endeavour to provide the necessary information in as clear a form as possible."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 141.]

I have here their first attempt. On 14 October the Government deposited in the Vote Office, under the signature of the Minister of State, an explanatory memorandum on the preliminary draft budget of the European Communities for 1986. That document contains a description of the rebate mechanism. According to the description given of the expected rebate for 1986, the gap is between 21·3 per cent. VAT-related expenditure and 13 per cent. allocated expenditure — that is, about 8 per cent. The Minister says that we shall thus receive a rebate of £870 million and pay about £73 million per month less than we otherwise would have paid. The explanatory memorandum, however, fails to show the calculations. I should have thought that the Government, having undertaken to provide a step-by-step child's guide, would have taken the opportunity to do so in the first explanatory memorandum in which they could boast of the success of their scheme, but no such thing appears in this document.

The memorandum, however, helps us considerably by stating that the VAT rate for 1986 is likely to be 1·24 per cent. of the VAT base. Thus, in the first year, we are more than halfway to reaching the 1·4 per cent. My hon. Friends have been asking how long this arrangement will last and how soon we shall be back in the same position. If things continue at the present rate, it will be next year. I admit, however, that the present figures include the paying back of certain loans and money drawn out, so two or three years might be a more reasonable estimate. So much for the Minister's suggestion of a lasting arrangement.

Interestingly, too, the explanatory memorandum shows that Community expenditure this year is up no less than 23 per cent. Tell that to the people north of the border, to the people in Liverpool, in Newham and in the Sudan. Tell that to the staff of the scientific units of the Overseas Development Administration, now fewer than they were a few years ago.

That is bad enough in itself, but there is also no discipline. In November 1983 the then Chancellor said that the Government were prepared to consider an increase in own resources provided,

"first, that agreement was reached on an effective control of the rate of increase of agricultural and other expenditure, and, secondly, that it was accompanied by an arrangement to ensure a fair sharing of the financial burden."—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 609.]

There may be a fairer sharing of the Community burden but without any doubt at all the burden is now much heavier than before. Indeed, it will be 23 per cent. heavier next year than it was this year.

There may be a fairer sharing, but there is clearly no discipline. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East pointed out, the Prime Minister has said that there is no discipline. The Select Committee on European Legislation, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, has also said that there is no discipline. Our second report states:

"The Committee do not perceive any legal implications in the Conclusions as presented in this document"—

that is, the document relating to financial discipline. Thus, in the first big parliamentary debate since the publication of certain newspaper articles, the Prime Minister and a

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Select Committee of the House of Commons are in full agreement that there is no financial discipline in the pretence put before us in earlier debates.

I began by saying that the Bill was about money and power and the use of both. It is clear that the expenditure of the EC has increased and is increasing. Thus, the powers of the EC have increased and are increasing. It is also patently clear that the powers of this House have decreased and are decreasing. All who vote for the Third Reading of the Bill today will be adding to that process. They will be accelerating the decline of the powers of this Parliament and, by that token, the legal powers and rights of the British people within their own land.

7.58 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) ended his speech on the high ground of constitutional propriety and loss of sovereignty by the House to the institutions of the EEC. I suppose the English frame of mind is more inclined to look towards the practical arguments. The proponents of Fontainebleau said that we had got firm control of expenditure within the EEC because we had a cast-iron system of budgetary control. They said that the Fontainebleau agreement was but the beginning of the manifestation of a firm political resolve to come to terms with the ever-growing expenditure in the EEC and, most of all, with the distortions and waste of the CAP. Not so, said those of us who were from the start opposed to Fontainebleau. We said that by allowing an increase in the contribution that we made through VAT we had taken away the one firm barrier to increased expenditure in the EEC.

There are advantages in the delay that the House has enjoyed as a result of the earlier protracted discussion of the Bill. Three more months have elapsed and we are entitled to consider the new evidence to see whether it tends to support the Government's position or the position of the opponents. All the evidence since late June and early July tends towards support for those of us who were opposed to an increase in own resources.

Let us consider for a moment the broader issues of public opinion. Of course, no man in the pub knows exactly what our contribution is to the EEC. When he is told that the Prime Minister has secured an automatic, lasting and cast-iron agreement, the man in the pub tends to believe it. He does not notice that, as it is put, teeny-weeny concessions are made here and there. It is only at a later stage that he adds up the various teeny-weeny concessions and begins to notice that there has not been strong control of expenditure.

There are broad areas where public opinion is beginning to notice the disadvantages of the common agricultural policy. In July the Halvergate marshes issue came to a head. What caused that? It was caused by farmers responding to price stimuli. Instead of leaving ancient meadows in the state in which they had been for centuries, the farmers wanted to plough them up. The Government could not say that this was inevitable because of market forces, albeit a distorted market, and that if wheat is selling at over £100 per tonne people will prefer to grow wheat on the Halvergate marshes rather than run store cattle on them. The Government could not say that. They had to say that by a mixture of planning control and countervailing subsidy they would endeavour to persuade the farmers to keep the marshes in the state they had been in for centuries.

The swing of public opinion is such that people are beginning to notice that the enclosures that were a beautiful part of our countryside for over 200 years are rapidly being ruined by being turned over to prairie farming, not because of great wickedness by farmers but because they are responding to price stimuli when cereal farming has become extremely profitable.

We are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) for pointing out the rising interest in the effect that food may have upon the human body. There is increasing interest in the amount of nitrogen used on cereal crops and the effect that that nitrogen has when it drains off into water courses.

Those two matters have drawn to the attention of the public the effect of high cereal prices on the common agricultural policy. I do not pretend that the man in the pub will say tomorrow, "I heard a splendid speech by Mr. Terence Higgins in the House of Commons and I agree with all that the Treasury Select Committee has said about the common agricultural policy." But people notice when someone says that if 5 cwt of nitrogen is put on an acre of marginal land it may go into the water courses and cause various forms of cancer. They notice when Bert in the village rips up a large number of hedges and explains that he has done so because he needs to cash in on the cereal bonanza.

Public opinion has moved since July in favour of those of us who were highly sceptical of the Fontainebleau agreement. Other factors are moving in our direction. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was a party to an agreement to attempt by intervention to reduce the value of the dollar against other currencies. The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is smiling at the impertinence and arrogance of central bankers who believe that they can, by intervention, permanently affect the value of currency. With that I agree, but I am sure he would agree that if the Americans are serious about wanting to reduce the value of their currency against other currencies they can do it by printing more dollars. I am not sufficiently expert in American politics to know whether they are serious about wanting to do that, but if they increase the quantity of dollars and thus reduce the price, it will have a horrifying effect upon the principal cost within the CAP — the disposal of the surplus upon world markets. We should have had an explanation of the effect upon the CAP and upon the budget of the EEC.

The supporters of the Fontainebleau agreement also said that it was not a botched-up, linked agreement but the beginning of a new political initiative in Europe by which the common agricultural policy would be transformed. It was said that it was not a desperate step to hike up the funds by sharp footwork but the beginning of a sustained political endeavour. It became clear when we examined the details of the agreement that there were so many ways in which member states could avoid the effects of the so-called system of budgetary discipline—by the aberrant circumstances clauses and all the rest — that it all depended upon the political will of member states.

We have had a quiet political time since the end of July but the EEC met throughout September. Through the good offices of the *Financial Times* we have been able to see which way the wind seems to be blowing in the EEC. On 20 September the *Financial Times* reported:

"Mr. Henning Christophersen, the Budget Commissioner . . . launched a strong attack on member states for agreeing to cuts which, he said, make the new members substantial net contributors".

That is significant because a commissioner, as a hybrid between a politician and a bureaucrat, is anxious to feel the political wind throughout the Community. He takes the view that it is necessary to expand the budget. If that is thought to be an aberrant view, as compared with that of the Commissioners, I invite the House to consider the *Financial Times* of 8 October which carried an interesting report by Mr. Ivo Dawnay in which he says that, because of political disagreement, proposals that had been made earlier to reduce the price of cereals — and thus the enormous cereal surplus which *The Times* says was running at 20 million tonnes before the present harvest came in — came to nothing. Everybody knows that although the harvest was difficult to get, it was very large. We have got a great deal of second grade corn. Before that harvest, there was a surplus of 20 million tonnes in store. We learnt that the Commission had proposals to reduce that surplus, but they were left vague. I do not want to read every word of Mr. Ivo Dawnay's report, but he said that the Commission concluded that there was simply not enough political will in the EEC to make any reductions in cereal prices.

The delay that the House has enjoyed, and which has given us a further period of reflection, reveals yet more evidence that the Fontainebleau agreement was not the beginning of the new political resolution to cut the budget and to reform the common agricultural policy, but merely a short-term desperate measure to persuade Parliaments of the EEC to give more money. All that has happened since July shows that we shall be back again and that we have thrown away the only real lever to control the vast expenditure of the EEC. It is so vast that nobody can understand it without a few hours of head scratching. I do not pretend that the British people understand the EEC's finances but, as they look at the countryside that they love and which has been a great feature of our national way of life, they see changes. They do not like those changes and, in the end, will express their dislike.

8.12 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I do not want to follow the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) down all the avenues in his concise, telling and effective speech, except to assure him that, on this matter, he speaks for England as surely and more devastatingly than the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) shouts for it.

The Bill is born out of dithering and duplicity. The dithering involves the procedures by which the Government decided to implement intergovernmental agreements, although they later changed their minds. In 1984, the Government introduced the first intergovernmental agreement under the European Communities Act 1972 and as being ancillary to the treaty, although it was a fairly fundamental constitutional matter. They were implementing an IGA which specifically stated that it was outside the treaty by procedures developed for passing treaty agreements. When that was challenged in the courts by Mr. Oliver Smedley, the Government changed their mind and decided not to use the procedure but laid Estimates and introduced a Consolidated Fund Bill. This Bill is the third approach.

Yet, having implicitly accepted Mr. Smedley's criticisms of the procedure by changing their approach, surely it is incumbent upon the Government to pay the considerable expenses that he incurred in clarifying the law for them. Their generosity to the EEC is in appalling contrast to their meanness to Mr. Smedley by the Government dithering about how to implement the IGA.

The Bill is being pushed through on the basis of misinformation and after a considerable hiccup in the proceedings. Initially, the Government intended to push it through fairly quickly at the end of June and the beginning of July but they then grasped the idea that it might be useful to drag their feet after the Prime Minister's humiliation at the Milan summit. She was humiliated largely because of the contrast between the decisions reached at that summit and the Foreign Office's propaganda about the quiet British takeover of the Common Market and how Britain was giving the lead. The sad contrast between that and reality meant that it was ill-advised, even for this Government, to rush through a Bill showering money on the EEC. The Government therefore agreed to what they should have accepted all along—delay.

The parking meter has now run out and the Bill must be passed if we are to get the principle of a rebate accepted. The Government want that principle in their financial calculations especially because of their current massive struggle to cut Government expenditure. The Prime Minister has to feed in more money to the Euro-meter or have the rebate towed away.

Even now, the Bill is being urged on misleading and fallacious arguments. The argument on which the case for the Bill is put is that we have a concession in return for the EEC's acceptance of budgetary discipline. Successive hon. Members have said that the only effective way in which to achieve budgetary discipline is to use the weapon that was in our hands before we agreed to the principle of this legislation—refusal to increase the ceiling on own resources contributions to the Community. That was the one method by which we could automatically, inevitably and certainly have forced the EEC into sensible budgeting, because implicit in that refusal was the threat of bankruptcy unless it mended its ways. It was a pistol directly to the head. We have thrown it away for a mess of Euro-promises.

It is a distortion to talk of budgetary discipline being achieved when, for no good reason, we have thrown away the only means by which it could have been enforced. There is no possibility of budgetary discipline in a CAP when an increase in production means an increase in subsidy. There is no discipline from the market—there is no discipline on production. There is not the discipline of the market because the subsidies guarantee the production. There is equally no budgetary discipline on production and as production increases, so does the cost of the CAP. We are throwing money into a bottomless pit and creating an environment in which there is no possibility of budgetary discipline.

Even in the so-called provision for budgetary discipline there is the amazing exception that the ceilings do not apply in "aberrant circumstances", whatever they may be. What way of enforcing discipline is that, for example, if there is a bumper harvest? More important, discipline is essentially a political decision taken by nations which have a vested interest in paying more to farmers and in ignoring their own brave words about discipline because of the

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political strength of the farming lobby in their systems. The Germans did that when they imposed the veto on the cut in cereal prices. They pay more to farmers because they are politically dependent on the farming community. Given that these are political decisions taken by a collection of states which have a vested interest in paying more to their farmers, there is no way that budgetary discipline will be enforced. In this matter as in others, we shall be in a minority of one.

All the evidence—the volume even since our debates in July is impressive—shows how inadequate the so-called discipline is. One can cite examples. The recent year-long investigation by the Court of Auditors concluded that the EEC has virtually no control over the payment of export subsidies. Those export subsidies make up a quarter of the farm budget. A recent report in *The Sunday Times* pointed out that the Commission was unable either to confirm or deny that £600 million-worth of fraud was involved because it

"did not have the information".

The auditors state that the Commission is powerless to enforce its own regulations.

A further report of the auditors relates to the olive oil regime, which takes up 5 per cent. of FEOGA spending, and which will rise after the enlargement of the Community. The report occupies 10 closely typed pages. Twenty substantive criticisms are made, none of which the Commission has answered.

Regarding projections for the future, the Home Grown Cereals Authority calculates that on present policies the cost of supporting cereals alone—the enormous, insane attempt to turn the whole of England into second-rate prairies—could reach 14 billion ecu by 1991. That is just 1·8 billion ecu short of all agricultural spending in 1983, and more than five times the cost of supporting cereals this year. To pay so much to encourage production so that one must then pay more to store it, is yet another folly. The 2 to 3 per cent. increase in yields per annum is certain to continue. Indeed, Agra Europe, which is a respected authority on these matters, estimates that we are now heading for a 50 million tonne grain mountain. That is yet a further folly. Yet the Foreign Secretary shows a touching faith in the Commission's ability to administer budgetary discipline.

The Commission—the body charged with implementing budgetary discipline — had to implement the supposedly automatic 5 per cent. cereal cuts this year. It tried and found that it could not hold the line on a 3·6 per cent. cut, and it now seems as if it will be unable to implement a 1·8 per cent. cut. Indeed, the Commission has now made so many concessions to the German farming interest that Mr. Andriessen has said that the effect of the changes so far agreed will be to cut cereal prices by something less than 1 per cent. So much for budgetary discipline and for the 5 per cent. automatic cut. The cut of less than 1 per cent. is at a time when cereal prices are about 20 per cent. or more too high. The 1986 budget assumes a mere 1·8 per cent. cut in cereal prices.

In addition, the Commission has been sending out its scouts for storage space not only in EEC countries because it is fast running out of storage space. It is now busy hiring storage space for the growing surpluses outside the Community in Switzerland, Austria and elsewhere. Beef is pouring into intervention at the rate of 25,000 tonnes a week, which will produce a surplus of 1 million tonnes by the end of the year. Agra Europe—an eminent source on these matters — notes that since the Council has refused to agree even to the Commission's reform measures, expenditure will climb steadily towards and collide with the Community's own financial resource limit.

According to Mr. Andrew Cahn, agricultural policy adviser to Lord Cockfield,

"At the end of 1985, intervention stocks will be worth Ecu 9 billion more. The annual cost of servicing these stocks is about Ecu 3·5 billion, which represents a contingent liability which has not been paid for."

In other words, there is a cost of 3·5 billion ecu, which has not been budgeted for. That figure is equal to 10 per cent. of the entire 1986 budget, yet it has not been allowed for in the calculations that are held so beguilingly before us to tell us about budgetary discipline.

We are being asked to push this measure through quickly at this washing-up end of the session because all the evidence, information and facts conspire to invalidate the promises of budgetary discipline which Ministers have held out to justify the measure. I welcome the Minister to his new job, but it is an awful one. In the past, the response to assault has been to lie back and think of England, but now it is to stand up and lie for Europe while Europe conspires to pull the rug from under every argument held out by Ministers to justify their actions. The proceedings over the 1986 budget demonstrate how far the rug is being pulled out from under Ministers' promises of budgetary discipline.

On 18 September, when the Council met to consider the Commission's draft budget, it agreed to a budget totalling 32 billion ecu, which was well above the Finance Ministers' self-imposed limit of 29·7 billion ecu. The Council agreed to nearly 3 billion ecu more than that limit. Although it cut nearly 3 billion ecu from the Commission draft, it was achieved by the various procedures which hon. Members have pointed out.

The Council postponed decisions on the accumulation of past commitments to regional and social policies. How will those commitments be paid? They have been postponed and left out of the calculation. Just as, in the past, the Community has assumed a 10-month year, it now assumes a 10-member community. It has taken no account of the advent of Spain and Portugal in the year in which they join, and has budgeted only for 10 members. Most monstrous of all, as the Labour Front Bench pointed out, it cut 130 million ecu from the Commission's proposed food budget. That would leave the food aid budget static, and represents a real cut of about 6 per cent.

In one of the Minister's first tasks in his new job, he assured the Community that that was acceptable because there had been reports of rain in Africa. As Minister for Housing, he dreaded the prospect of rain because it would have revealed the inadequacy of the Government's housing programme, yet in his new job he welcomes the prospect of rain because it allows him to cut our contributions to the food budget and therefore impose some budgetary discipline at the expense of starving people in Africa.

That is how the figures were manipulated by the Council of Ministers on 18 September, and that bodes ill for future control.

The CAP budget overshot by 11 per cent. last year, simply because of unforecast increases in beef intervention

and continuing high dairy costs. The same problems will happen, perhaps with different products, remorselessly year after year, particularly because of the fall of the dollar. The budget assumes an ecu-dollar exchange rate of 1·20, which is approximately the current level, but the dollar is coming down and we are told that the policy of European Governments will be directed to getting the dollar down further.

However, for every percentage point fall in the dollar below 1·20 to the ecu, CAP costs will increase by between 70 million and 100 million ecu. In other words, if Governments achieve the object of their exchange rate policy we shall be imposing on ourselves an ever higher CAP burden.

By the so-called budgetary discipline, we are strengthening agricultural protectionism, which is bad for the world and particularly bad for this country and bodes ill in the climate of increasing industrial protectionism towards which we are heading as a result of the American trade deficit. What right have we to argue against American protectionism when, for no valid reason, we have so eagerly accepted agricultural protectionism at such enormous cost? We are essentially legislating lies, or at least gross distortion.

The process of argument and justification for the Bill must encourage a cynical view of the Community. There are lies, damn lies and Euro-truths. Ministers defend the indefensible, pretend that suffering in the market is a benefit and that the unacceptable is not happening and justify it all with a new framework of distortion.

Ministers could have said that it is a bad deal, but that it is the only one we can get and that if we are to stay in the Common Market and derive all the myraid benefits of membership we shall have to accept it. They could have said that we are getting a bit back and it is worth having to pay a lot more to get that bit back. They could have said that the Common Market had us over a barrel over the rebate, but had offered us a few promises of good behaviour — which it does not mean — so that the Government could save face in the House.

The Government could have justified the measure in those honest but minimal terms, but they did not. They went so far as to say that this is a new beginning and that tough, dynamic negotiations by our abrasive Foreign Secretary had won a major advance. They said that there had been a dramatic change, that the whole of Europe is different, that budgetary discipline would be imposed and that we had a permanent settlement of which we could be proud — at least until we have to increase our contribution to 1·6 per cent., when the whole thing is up for grabs again.

Ministers justified their case with a hype that took distortion to ludicrous lengths. When giving us those distortions, Ministers ought to think about what justifications and excuses they will be able to give when they have to return to justify the increase in agricultural expenditure that occurs after the imposition of the so-called budgetary discipline, a sudden new intergovernmental contribution for another Christmas present for the Common Market and the early increase in the own resources ceiling which is inevitable and will come quickly. Having trundled out every possible excuse, distortion and argument as hostages to get this inadequate Bill, what excuses will Ministers be able to give us in the future?

Why are the Government so generous to the Common Market? Why are they so strict, stern and mean towards every useful purpose of spending in this country and so generous in handing money over to that inadequate institution? Why is housing being slashed in this country? Why is there no money to expand our economy? Why are our local authorities being rate-capped and local government spending and services castrated? Why is our infrastructure creaking? Why is Britain shabbier, meaner and nastier than ever before? And why, in those circumstances, are the Government handing out money in an unquestioning fashion and with half-baked excuses to a Common Market from which we get so little?

What do we get for our contribution, which will be £1,200 million this year and £1,000 million in a year after the settlement comes into force? We know the massive benefits in trade — a turning round of a surplus in manufacturing trade of £2,000 million in 1970, at 1983 prices, to a deficit of about £8,000 million or £9,000 million. We know the benefits in terms of the cost of food and the food mountains. We know what benefits we have given to underdeveloped countries by distorting their trade, with Europe producing highly subsidised and expensive sugar while the sugar industry of under-developed countries staggers into ruin.

Can the Government please quantify the benefits that we get in return for our massive contributions of £1,200 million this year and £1,000 million a year after the settlement goes through?

8.37 pm

Mr. Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Once again, I follow the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) in a Common Market debate and once again I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman, though his peroration went slightly awry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said that he opposed the Bill because it was bad for Britain. I oppose it because it is bad for Europe. It is almost exactly 30 years since, as a new hon. Member, I joined a small band of colleagues to argue for this country to be represented at the Messina conference and to join the Common Market. After three decades, all that we seem to have is a common agricultural policy. No one can really dispute that.

As several hon. Members have said, we shall be back again in a year or two being asked for more money to hand over, not for Europe—do not let us deceive ourselves about that—but for the CAP.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby spoke about the increase in output. If anything, he understated the figures. We are poised for a remarkable expansion of food production. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-West (Mr. Budgen) spoke about nitrates. We are developing varieties of wheat that will be able to absorb and make much greater use of nitrates, so that by the 1990s we shall be growing about twice as much wheat as we are growing now. On land where 3 tonnes to the acre is grown—that is about the national average on good land for this year's harvest—6 tonnes per acre will be grown. It will not be milling wheat suitable for consumption by people in this country or even in Ethiopia. It will be feed wheat, of poor quality, to be used for making food compounds to be consumed by cattle, pigs or poultry. Those who say, in good faith no doubt, that we

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should send such food to Ethiopia do not understand the poor quality of so much of the wheat being produced in northern Europe.

Mr right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) spoke of his visit to the United States. There millions of acres capable of growing good quality milling wheat for human consumption are out of production. Two or three years ago I was in Australia and flew over tens of thousands of acres of land capable of growing top quality milling wheat which were out of production and reverting to scrub. That is a direct consequence of the common agricultural policy. Large areas throughout the world which could grow wheat for human consumption are not being cultivated while in the United Kingdom and northern Europe we are laying waste to our countryside. We are draining the wetlands, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West said; and we are ripping up the hedgerows, as another hon. Member said, to produce food for the intervention stores.

We began the last harvest with a surplus of 3 million tonnes of feed wheat or cattle food. After the harvest the surplus is even larger. The Select Committee on Agriculture begins on Thursday to investigate what will happen to the feed wheat. The evidence will probably be that large quantities are to be destroyed by pests such as weevils and that no market for this surplus feed wheat exists.

By giving more and more money to the common agricultural policy we are stimulating further output in types of food which the world does not want. Not even Ethiopia wants it. I hope that no one will suggest that we should send our vast surpluses of butter and sugar to people suffering from malnutrition.

In the next few years resources will be transferred to southern Europe in an effort to support agriculture in Greece, Italy, southern France, Spain and Portugal. Anyone who has visited those countries knows that just as a tremendous potential exists for expanding the production of northern European foodstuffs, so there is a tremendous possibility of expanding the output of olive oil, tobacco, lemons, oranges, wine and paddy rice. We do not produce such crops so our farmers have no interest in them. That is a major argument for repatriating agricultural policy.

The CAP is a mechanism for continually increasing output, but it fails to support farmers. Throughout the Common Market there is a steady exodus from the land. When the CAP was introduced 20 million European families earned their living from the land. Today fewer than 8 million families succeed in doing so. Families leave the land in their hundreds and thousands each year. The CAP is inherently wrong. It increases output yet fails to support farmers.

We need a policy which has the opposite effect. It should cool down the system, curb output and support farmers in the way in which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) described. The CAP is damaging to agriculture in western Europe. It will cause great troubles in the future.

Only a few Euro-fanatics are present today. Perhaps we should devise a new rule for Common Market debates so that only hon. Members who attend a debate may vote. We would swamp them by two to one at least every time we voted.

I ask the Euro-enthusiasts who are here — one of whom is sitting on the Government Front Bench — whether we shall achieve any European unity in what matters by continuing to encourage the CAP on its present course. If we are in earnest about reforming the CAP we must be firm. We do not want rancour or bitterness. We should simply say to our partners that the CAP is not achieving what we set out to achieve in the 1950s. We must bring it to an end and, quietly and patiently, without a row, say that we shall give no more money to the common agricultural policy. Until we do that — and Britain can do it—there will never be any real reform of the CAP. That is why I hope that those who wish to see some movement towards European unity will think again about the Bill.

8.48 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I agree with almost everything that the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) said. He is a noted expert on agriculture, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), with his wealth of statistics. I shall devote most of my speech, not to agriculture, but to the circumstances surrounding the Bill.

I expect that the Minister of State will tell the House boldly that the Bill marks a new stage in the financial relationships between the United Kingdom and the rest of the Common Market. I have no doubt that he will believe that. However, we must remember that this is just another crisis in the continuing series of financial crises and problems connected with the relationship between Britain and the rest of the Common Market.

Similar crises have arisen under both Labour and Conservative Governments. Each time the crisis has been patched up with agreements, some of which were better than others. Not a single agreement on finance has been reached since Britain became a member of the Community in January 1973 which has not subsequently been unravelled or turned up in a different form, presenting another problem for the House and the Government of the day.

I am sure that we shall be told that the Bill marks a new beginning in the financial relationship between Britain and the rest of the Community. I think that we should take such assertions with a pinch of salt.

That the debate is taking place after the events of 1 July and 2 July in Committee shows that the Prime Minister has had a substantial change of mind. I hope that the Minister of State will explain the background because it is a mystery.

After Second Reading we moved on to the Committee stage on 1 July, before the recess. The Committee continued into the small hours of 2 July. We disposed of all the amendments. Before the Committee stage began we had an agreement—I hesitate to say in this context that it was an inter-party agreement—that all stages up to Third Reading would be taken in one sitting. Only one vote took place in Committee. In return for that agreement the Government said that they would not bring the Bill back to the House before the recess.

The events about which I am speaking happened at least four weeks before the summer recess. Usually we would have expected the Committee stage to be concluded in the following week and the Bill then to have moved to Third Reading and to the House of Lords. That did not happen for one good reason—the Prime Minister, and not in a

fit of pique, was alarmed at the proceedings at the Milan conference. She decided to reserve the Bill as a useful weapon so that if other countries did the dirty on Britain in the post-Milan negotiations we would have a weapon up our sleeves to repay them in the same coin by withholding assent to the 1·6 per cent. agreement reached at an earlier meeting.

I hope that the Minister will enlighten us on what has happened since 1 July to render the Prime Minister's fears and worries nugatory. The negotiations in various fringe meetings of the Council have been taking place throughout the summer, and are not concluded. I accept the Prime Minister's feelings about that major threat, and it remains a threat. It consists of possible amendment to the treaty of Rome—we would find any amendments unacceptable—a major extension of competence for the EEC into areas such as education and the environment and an extension of the powers of the European Assembly. Those were being discussed at fringe meetings during the Milan conference.

I want the Minister to tell us what assurances we have received since 1 July, when the Committee stage of the Bill was postponed, to show that we are now safe and that there will be no amendments to the treaty of Rome, no extension of competence for the EC into areas that are not covered by the treaty and no extension of the powers of the European Assembly.

I know that the Minister will almost certainly say that negotiations are continuing—but that he can assure the House of the British Government's attitude. With great respect, that is not good enough when we are considering a Bill on Third Reading. Once it has been passed, we will not see it again and the damage will have been done. We have a duty to ensure that the Government retain the weapon that they required following the Milan conference.

The Minister can give us no assurance that the three points that I have mentioned will not take place. The Minister will tell us that the Government will resist such change, but they have resisted EEC proposals before. There was a time when the Prime Minister was on record as saying that the Government would resist to the utmost any increase in the 1 per cent. VAT limit. We have now conceded such an increase—although I make no party political point about that.

What assurances are we likely to receive? There will be none from the Minister tonight. That must mean that the Prime Minister has changed her mind on the vital issue of protecting British national interests. Once the Bill has been passed, she will have no weapon with which to answer those in the EEC who wish to push the country and the Community further towards federalism. That would involve treaty amendments, an extension of power of the European Assembly and an extension of competence for the EEC.

As we said in July, the intergovernmental agreement is one of the most amazing pieces of paper ever to be put before this House in the guise of a legal agreement. The interesting question is why it should be an intergovernmental agreement. It involved all the same Ministers who were meeting in the Council, so why could they not have taken a Council decision? We know that that is because the Council would then have been going against its declared policy on the VAT limit and own resources. In 1984, and again in 1985, the Ministers invented a subterfuge to get around the member states meeting in council, but not meeting as a council.

I have a copy of the French text, which puts things beautifully. It is much better than the English version before the House. It refers to one of the objectives of the member states, meeting "au sein du conseil", which means "in the bosom of the council". That is a heartwarming expression and much better than "within the council", which is the English translation. It conveys the flavour of the character of the subterfuge in which they were indulging at our expense.

The members of the Council were unable to do something acting as the legally constituted Council of the European Community. They were foiled in their attempt to do anything under the basic treaties, so they invented a new mechanism. That raises a problem for the House. We are told that the Bill will clarify the future of our financial relationship with the Community. It will be put on a sound footing and, as the Minister said, there will never be any need to come back for additional money. Indeed, I think that his actual words were that that would be "impossible to conceive."

As the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is to reply to the debate, it is apposite to draw attention to a parliamentary answer that he gave to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 20 June. He said:

> "The new own resources decision, like the existing own resources decision, makes no provision for additional sums to be made available in the event of the VAT ceiling being reached but neither does it exclude them. Sums provided under intergovernmental agreements are not own resources." — [*Official Report*, 20 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. *204*.]

There is another subterfuge now. Not only has the Council invented a new mechanism entirely outwith the scope of the treaties that will put more money into the budget of the European Community, but we now have a mechanism for getting around any conceivable decision taken by any national Government on own resources. We now have a mechanism for pushing money into the EEC from member states which, we are told, has nothing to do with own resources.

The member states, meeting in the bosom of the Council, have invented a new financial mechanism. We will, of course, be told that that is still subject to parliamentary control. It is nice to be told that, but we have not been consulted, and I bet that the other member Parliaments have not been consulted, on whether they want an additional financial mechanism. Why is not the VAT and own resources system good enough? It proved not to be good enough in both 1984 and 1985, so we now have intergovernmental agreement.

That is not the end of the matter. The status of the intergovernmental agreement is uncertain in Community law. If we had a Government really looking after British interests and concerned to ensure that everything done by the European Community was in accordance with the basic treaties, rules and regulations laid down and decided by member states, they would be challenging this intergovernmental agreement in the European Court. It is not within the scope of the treaties. It is ultra vires.

Ministers — whether they are meeting within the Council or within the bosom of the Council or as the Council—do not have the power to take such action. Nevertheless, meeting within the bosom of the Council, they have arrogated to themselves powers which no Parliament and no basic treaty has given them.

I am surprised that more has not been made of that point. We shall return to it because, despite the soothing

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words of the Minister—in which he said that he found it impossible to conceive that the new financial mechanisms would not give the Community the money that it required—I fear that we must take the matter with a pinch of salt because we have received such assurances before.

For example, we were told that 1 per cent. would be enough. We are now told that we can be sure that 1·4 per cent. will be enough. However, on the basis of the figures given by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby, it seems that 1·4 per cent. will soon not be enough.

Much has been said about budgetary discipline, so I will not weary the House on the subject. While the system of budgetary discipline even on paper did not look too good, some of us were willing to give it a chance. Indeed, we had no choice but to do so. There has been some cut back on the dairy products side because of the milk quotas, but those who know and have worked in agriculture appreciate that farmers do not respond to incentives in the same way as to other sections of the community.

If quotas are cut and prices reduced, the chances are that some farmers will produce more. I appreciate, of course, that some will go out of production. The result is likely to be that the end position will be no better than the earlier position. It could conceivably be worse.

If we cut cereal prices this year or next year, which is the hope of this and some other Governments, that will not reduce the cereal mountain because, as with "Alice Through the Looking Glass," farmers will run twice as fast to stay in the same place; they will produce more to maintain their net incomes and profits, and we shall have to shoulder that burden.

I fear, therefore, that the CAP is out of control, and I draw the attention of the House to the wise remarks of the hon. Member for Holland with Boston in connection with Mediterranean agriculture. This aspect has worried me at least for the last 10 years in view of previous agreements on Mediterranean agriculture. This country has not played any real part in those agreements, because of our lack of Mediterranean-type agriculture, and we have let the southern Europeans get on with it. The Germans have done the same, although we are the paymasters of the Community.

With Spain and Portugal coming in, there will be a large expansion of production in items such as olive oil, citrus fruits and wine. The cost of disposing of those will eventually approach the current cost of disposing of the beef surplus, though perhaps not as high as the dairy surplus and certainly not as high as the cereal surplus.

I am concentrating on the trend in common agricultural expenditure. I challenge any Minister to deny that that expenditure will continue to go remorselessly upwards. That would happen even if the budgetary discipline agreement were adhered to by everybody, and we know that it will not because there are sufficient loopholes in it to drive through a coach and horses.

The agreement before the House tonight is based on a trade-off, the sort of bargaining to which we have got used during our 12 years' membership of the Community. It is ironic that in our 13th year of membership we should still be talking about finally resolving our financial relationships with the Community. It may be an unlucky thirteenth because the Bill marks a new departure since 1 January 1973, and it is significant on that account.

We bargained away the 1 per cent. VAT limit. As the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) pointed out to the Minister in an intervention, the Prime Minister's original intention was to stick to the justice of our case. We should now constantly emphasise the fact that in our relationships with the rest of the EEC we can no longer, as the Bill shows, rely on getting justice simply because of the justice of our cause. Justice in the European Community now, as the Bill shows, must be purchased by concessions. Justice in itself is no longer good enough. We must buy it. That has been the case with many societies and institutions in the past, and hon. Members in all parts of the House must be critical of such an approach.

That is a bad deal for Britain and we are likely to see further developments towards federalism. We have thrown away all the financial weapons that we ever had. The Minister says that we still have to move from 1·4 per cent. to 1·6 per cent. and that that can happen only with the agreement of all Governments. However, the issue will not be presented to the House in that way in one year's or two year's time. There will be a trade off. We shall be told by our partners that if we do not agree to 1·6 per cent. there will be no rebate for us, or we shall be denied something else that we want. We shall have to bargain and in the end we shall concede because 1·6 per cent. will be on the statute book.

The presence of 1·6 per cent. on the statute book, or provision for it, is a sign that the Government accept that the ceiling of 1·4 per cent. will eventually be breached. That can be only because the budget discipline mechanism within the common agricultural policy will not work. If it worked, there would be no need to breach 1·4 per cent. It is a fact that we are making provision for the breach, albeit with the safeguards of parliamentary scrutiny and approval. The principle is before us. We know that a ceiling of 1·6 per cent. will appear on the statute book. That is a sign that the Government have no confidence in the financial discipline mechanism.

If the proposal that is before us were put to the British people and explained to them, I believe that they would reject it. We must continue arguing our case in the absence of our colleagues who are likely to flock into the Chamber prior to supporting the Government when the Division takes place. It is a bad deal and a bad Bill and I hope that more and more Members, especially on the Government side, where the influence really lies, will object to it and show that objection by voting against it.

9.7 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): It is with great trepidation that I contribute to the debate in the presence of so many experts on both sides of the House. The issue before us is not one in which I have taken a great deal of in-depth interest. I shall speak from the point of view of someone who obtains information from the newspapers, be they the *Daily Telegraph* or *The Sun*. In other words, I contribute to the debate as an ordinary person. That is the person that the Government must bear in mind when they make these decisions.

My hon. Friend the Minster of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, made an intervention to ask whether it was believed that the Government would recommend additional expenditure if that were not in the public interest. Surely that depends on how one conceives the national interest. I do not believe that the national interest is being reflected by the Government on this issue.

The ordinary person is sick of ever-increasing expenditure on the EEC budget, especially at a time when the contribution from central Government to local authorities is declining. The public are asked why restrictions are being places on local authority spending if we can afford to waste money by directing it to the EEC.

The public are also sick of unfulfilled promises. We have heard much about tighter financial discipline within the EEC and I was rather surprised when I read the speech that the Home Secretary made last week on additional manpower for the Metropolitan police. He made it clear that he expects greater efficiency and more value for money in the Metropolitan police before he will provide additional resources. It is a pity that the Government do not take that view about EEC expenditure. If we adopted the same approach to the EEC, the British people might be more receptive to some of the things that take place within it.

The Government might say, "Do not worry, we shall get something from the additional expenditure." The same argument applies when it is advocated that more money should be made available to local authorities. The same can be said of additional expenditure on the police. I am sure that the local authorities would say—I speak as a local councillor—"If we are given more money, we can improve local services, such as the roads and housing. We shall ensure that the police provide better patrolling, especially in the inner city areas." The argument that we get more for paying more is justified nationally as well as internationally.

The ordinary British person is sick of wasted expenditure, which leads to the production of surpluses that are stored, destroyed or sold to Russia at give-away prices. The people cannot understand how we can continue encouraging overproduction and the sale of the produce for almost nothing to our sworn enemy, the Soviet Union. How on earth can that be justified? How can it continue at its present level? Surpluses in beef, butter, skimmed milk and sugar are still growing.

Hon. Members, whether those who have been present in the Chamber or those who will flock in later to vote, who believe everything said by my hon. Friend the Minister will believe anything.

9.10 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I take part in this debate because of the effect of the common agricultural policy on my constituency. It must be obvious to my Front Bench colleagues that this is not the most popular Bill before the House this Session. It is certainly not popular among Conservative Back Benchers. That view is taken not just by people who are hostile to the EC. We are adopting the same attitudes to Europe as we adopt towards local government expenditure. Later this evening we shall debate the clawback from Scottish local authorities. It is interesting to note some of the local authorities that are listed for clawback. If anyone had said to me six years ago that I would be supporting a Bill to deal with Perth and Kinross district council as an authority that spends vast sums I would have said "Bonkers". We are asked to penalise one of the most prudent authorities that I have come across during my years in politics. Local authorities have been affected by factors that are largely outside their control.

Against that background I have to say to the farmers in my constituency, "You realise that one of the reasons why we are agreeing to this additional expenditure and why our local authority is being penalised is that the measure will benefit farmers in the country at large." They do not believe me. They tell me that they find it difficult, if not impossible, to involve themselves in long-term planning. If this policy were to benefit the country at large, even farmers in my constituency would accept that it was worth while. The problem is that they do not believe that these measures will benefit them or the country at large. They recognise that the production of surpluses cannot go on for ever.

The raspberry crop in Scotland does not enjoy massive EC funding and does not generate surpluses. Other member states have been cheating—I use the word carefully and deliberately—by exporting EC soft fruit surpluses and selling them to the United Kingdom. Raspberries have been dumped in Britain at below production costs. Raspberries have been grown in Scotland throughout this century and for a large part of the last century. This Scottish production has largely met the demands of the United Kingdom market and has had export potential. However, the raspberry crop in Scotland no longer gives the returns that it should and could produce in a free market. We are not asking for anything other than a free market. Farmers are unhappy because they believe that the way in which we are operating the CAP in the long term will be damaging to the country at large. They believe that the original strategic reason for exporting agricultural products has been forgotten. It will continue to be forgotten because Europe does not have the same strategic interest in these islands that we have. The farmers in Perthshire and North Tayside feel that they would be looked after better by the Westminster Government than by Brussels.

We must study the Bill against that background. One may not be hostile to the European concept or against trying to make something work in Europe, but the common agricultural policy is not working to the farmers' advantage, as they see it. It is not working, as the taxpayers see it, to their advantage, and it is not working to the advantage of Third world countries, which have seen their economies substantially damaged first, by the way that we have operated the CAP and, secondly, by the way that we have disposed of surpluses.

This Government of all Governments have a policy of prudent management. I support that fully. I do not equivocate on that. But within prudent management there must be sensible and logical management. It must be seen by the public to be sensible and logical.

No one should under-estimate the difficulties facing our Ministers when they go to Europe. Anyone who thinks that to take part in the horse trading that goes on in Europe is a sinecure has made no attempt to discover the pressure under which everyone there works. Whether one is a politician in France, Germany or the United Kingdom, one of the difficulties that must be faced in a democracy is that we all have to go for re-election. European politicians may be under much greater pressure because of the way the CAP operates to their advantage. We have a responsibility to adopt a much more positive and tougher line.

My hon. Friends on the Front Bench may just get away with things tonight, and in terms of votes the result may look good, but they should not for one minute think that the vote will represent how people in the House or the country view the way Europe is going with the common agricultural policy.

9.17 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) I hope that one thing is achieved tonight. I hope that the Government will think carefully about the fact that every Conservative Member who has spoken has spoken against the Bill. They have said that they will either vote against the Bill or not support it.

This is the first time in the 21 years that I have been in the House of Commons when traditional Euro-people have not been putting what is called the other side of the case. The numbers have not declined. The so-called Euro-enthusiasts have not been here. We know that that is because they are acutely embarrassed by the Bill. It goes against everything for which Conservative Governments stand. That is bad for Britain and for the future of the Common Market.

We cannot ignore the fact that the purpose of the Bill is to increase public spending on the Common Market by about 25 per cent. We must ask ourselves how that is consistent with the attitude that Ministers have taken over every other authority. My health authority's cash has been clobbered. We have had to make cuts in the things that we need. Our county councils cannot repaint our schools because, rightly, the Government have said that we must curb public expenditure. Our district councils have great difficulty in maintaining parks and playgrounds for children because public expenditure must be controlled in the public interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) eloquently asked how the blazes more public expenditure on the Common Market is good but more public expenditure in Britain is bad. Have we any evidence that the Common Market spends money more sensibly than local councils and health authorities? The sad fact is that all the evidence shows that the Common Market spends money like a drunken sailor, and everyone knows it. The Government also know that. We are to increase the Common Market's money by 25 per cent. and give it billions of pounds more to spend on our behalf.

But, of course, the argument is: maybe more money is going in, but we will probably get more money out. The Minister of State, who opened the debate, is certainly, as a sensible and prudent person, more aware than anyone that when we talk about the money coming back it is not a question of money coming out of one pocket and going into another. Where does the money go? The Minister may recall that I got an answer in Parliament only today about where some of Britain's money goes to, and what we get back. Last year £400 million of the money that we got back did not actually come to us; it was given to traders as a subsidy to dump food in the Soviet Union. So the £400 million does not really come to us. When Government say, therefore, that this year our net contribution is £1,200 million after payments to ourselves, it must be remembered that a lot of payments are not to ourselves, they are simply subsidies for dumping food abroad at a very low price. So we must ask ourselves why we are doing it.

What I think is a tragedy for those who accept the Common Market is that we have thrown away the one chance in 12 years of obtaining reforms of the agricultural policy. Everybody admits that the CAP is nonsense, that it is appalling. There are some who are slightly cautious. I remember the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir Russell Johnston) saying that his policy was that, while we had to change it, nothing must happen quickly, nothing must damage farming, particularly in Inverness.

Most do not accept that point of view. We say that change must come but we know that there is no will whatsoever in Europe to change the CAP. Everyone knows that it is crazy, but I believe that even in the Government quite a few Ministers are happy that other member states are blocking the reform of the CAP because they know that it would not be very popular, that it would involve some harsh decisions and that some people would be hurt.

Surely, if we really believe that the CAP should be reformed, we cannot pass this Bill. The only way we will reform the CAP is to hold back on the cash. The only way to stop wasteful expenditure is to hold back on the cash. Why is it that what is good for Lambeth and Liverpool is not good for the Common Market?

It would not be so bad if the money were not wasted in such an appalling way, but, according to a parliamentary answer only the other day, 51 per cent. of every penny now spent by the Common Market on all its activities is spent on either destroying or dumping food or on storing surpluses, with the Soviet Union and east Europe being the main beneficiaries. I wonder how many Conservative Members are aware that, since the Conservative Government came to power, the export of cheap, subsidised food to the Soviet Union has increased tenfold—by 1,000 per cent.—and an answer in *Hansard* only this morning shows that this year it has increased yet again by 50 per cent.

We are now sending 200,000 tonnes of cheap food to Russia every week at crazy prices. I said in an earlier debate that we were sending top quality beef at 40p a pound; we are now sending it at 19p under a special deal. We are sending butter at 18p a pound, sugar at 5p a pound and, of course, we are sending wine at this crazy figure of 5·5p a litre.

That is where the money will go, so let those here tonight be fully aware of what we are doing. We are allowing more cash to be spent by this Government on dumping more cheap food in the Soviet Union. That is absolutely crazy. Of course, the Government said that we have an assurance from the Common Market that it will try to spend less on farming in the future, but the Government know that that is wholly bogus because this so-called agreement says that we can exceed that by any amount we want at any time if the majority of member states say that it has been an exceptional year. We know that every year has been an exceptional year, as every year will be an exceptional year; and we have absolutely no protection. We have no veto. We cannot stop it. With this Bill, if the Common Market wanted to increase its spending on agriculture by 50 per cent. next year, we could do nothing about it. Our only protection would consist in the majority of states agreeing that it has not been an exceptional year.

Today most of us have been seeing people who are concerned about world poverty. They talk about how crazy it is that we have all these food surpluses and starving people. There is a far greater danger to the Third world. Why is there so much poverty? Why cannot those countries pay their debts? Why do we find so much starvation and misery in the Third world? The main reason

is that world food prices are at an all-time low, and those wretched countries are not getting a decent price for their agricultural produce.

Why are food prices at an all-time low? The only reason is that the Common Market is dumping more and more food. If we want to do something for the Third world, we do not want to send those countries more wheat that they cannot consume or transport. Instead, we should not distort world food prices, as we are now doing, and deprive those people of a decent price for their food. For example, the Common Market export rebate for beef is almost its total price, when we are dumping it at 18p a pound. How do we expect people to compete with that? When we are dumping sugar at £80 at tonne on the world market because we buy it in at £400 a tonne and then dump it, how do we expect the poor people of Pakistan, Mauritius and other places to get a decent return on their produce?

If we pass the Bill, it will mean more money to spread devastation, misery and distress in the Third world. It will mean more countries unable to pay their debts or buy goods from Britain. In my heart, I believe that every Tory here knows that this is a wretched Bill, which will stop Common Market reform. It will mean more waste of our money going to the wrong policies. At some stage we shall have to say no. I wish that we would do it tonight.

9.27 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I should like to break the mould referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and make a small contribution as a Euro-person—that is, someone who has slaved for five years in the trenches of the European Parliament trying to build a better and greater Europe. It is in that spirit that I wish to make a few remarks, but in a context that has not been given full consideration.

One of the main reasons that has been given—although little reference has been made to it in the debate—for the increase in the budgetary requirements of the EC is the enlargement of the EC. I make no apology for returning to that theme, because I think that I am correct in saying that the only time that the subject has been touched upon in the House since 1978 was during my Adjournment debate just before Easter this year. My hon. Friend the Minister of State may remember it because he and I discussed the very important matter of the enlargement of the EC. I say "he and I" deliberately because it was he and I. It is an important matter in respect of the argument.

One of the main reasons that we are given for increasing the Community's resources is that it will enable us to finance the enlargement of the Community to include the entry of Spain and Portugal. Those of us who have given the matter any thought are few to date, although it will be brought to us between now and the end of the year. I hope that it will be fully debated by the House. We should cast our minds back to those who argued for the entry of Greece to the EC some years ago, and consider the effects that that has had.

Greece is a small country. I was going to say that it is a peripheral country, but it is not even geographically contiguous to the Community. Yet we have brought her in and it has caused nothing but trouble since. Politically, in terms of external relations and political co-operation, to say nothing of the budget, the entry of Greece into the Community has been an unmitigated disaster. We are now being told that the entry of two much more significant countries will be of great benefit to the Community, with all the budgetary implications.

The argument is based on two or three important legs. One is the strategic argument about NATO. It has always puzzled me because, in the Community, Ireland is neutral and not a member of NATO. France's connection with NATO is variable and dubious. Greece is in the European Economic Community and will probably keep Turkey, the single most important member of NATO, out for as long as she can. Yet we are asked to accept that the entry of Spain and Portugal is somehow linked with their continuing membership of NATO.

Then we are asked to be persuaded that there will be benefits to the people of the Community and of this country by the entry of those two countries. Let us consider Spain because it is by far the more important and significant. I ask hon. Members to consider how we shall benefit by bringing into the Community, which allows the benefits of free trade and free movements of goods, a country such as Spain which enjoys lower labour costs and greenfield automobile manufacturing sites. Those things will enable her to compete more directly and competitively with our own manufacturing industry, particularly in the west midlands, which I happen to know best. It has a drop forging industry and an automotive industry, together with the related industries. We are asked to agree that, by bringing such a major potential competitor into the Community, we shall benefit. I doubt that.

Even more significantly, our horticulturists and those involved in agriculture are being asked to accept that when we are asked to spend our money irrigating Spain to increase the productivity of Spanish agriculture we shall benefit. I ask those hon. Members with horticultural interests to go to those involved and say, "How will you benefit from the inclusion of Spain in the EC?".

I ask the House to consider further how altering the political balance of the Community from one which has been, quite frankly, dominated by the northern countries to a potential alignment of Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and France—when it suits her purpose—will benefit us. How will we benefit from that? Those countries have already given the signals in all the Mediterranean plans that have been referred to.

We shall see a significant shift in the political, economic and financial balance of the Community towards the south. That is directly related to budgetary matters. The argument will be a powerful and persuasive one: that the poor countries of the south need our assistance and support. But, make no mistake, we will have to answer to the people of this country because the benefits which our farmers have obtained from the Community will, in a direct and relevant sense, suffer in the future when the resources of the Community are shifted, as they will inevitably be, to the south of the Community if we accept these two countries into membership.

Sir Russell Johnston: The only argument which the hon. Member has not dealt with in putting up these Aunt Sallies and knocking them down is the basic argument that both Spain and Portugal were under dictatorships, and the European Community will provide them with the political stability which they previously lacked. It was never argued that it would be of direct benefit to this country, for those countries to come in.

Mr. Forth: I wondered whether that might arise. I am not entirely persuaded by that argument, for two important reasons. If we bring those countries in and the political nature of their Governments change, there is no mechanism in the Community for throwing them out. The hon. Member knows probably better than I, because he has long experience of such matters, that there is no mechanism in the EC for ejecting a member country. For that reason I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. Nor do I accept that mere membership of the EC is necessarily some guarantee of democracy, however we may define that. Nor do I know who is to judge whether a shift in the political system in any member state is acceptable.

I am not sure that I could ask my electorate to pick up the financial tab for guaranteeing democracy in a country like Spain or Portugal. I am not convinced that their democratic regimes are as necessary to the defence of the West as many people imagine. But that must be left to individual judgement. I am not arrogant enough to seek to impose my political views or my political system on a country with a political tradition, such as that in Portugal, which is much longer than ours.

I am at a loss to understand why I am expected to endorse this major increase in Community resources in order to give me, my constituents or my country the benefits that it is said would flow from enlargement of the Community. That is my principal reason, although many others have been referred to by many of my hon. Friends. I look forward to returning between now and Christmas to the issue of enlargement of the Community. I hope that we will have a full debate on the matter before being asked to agree. It is for that reason that I shall vote against the Bill as my first gesture to warn the House on the arguments about the enlargement of the Community.

9.34 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Hon. Members on both sides have put a large number of important questions to the Government. They have asked for a guarantee that the Government will not bring in another Bill of this kind asking for endorsement of a further intergovernmental agreement and yet more money to be given to the Community. They have asked when the VAT ceiling will be raised to 1·6 per cent. and for the Government's views on that. Even more fundamentally, they have raised important issues about the powers of the European Assembly and whether there will be any further encroachment on British sovereignty.

All those issues have properly been raised by hon. Members on both sides in today's debate and we now await the winding-up speech of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but we know that none of the questions will be answered. Instead, the Minister will make one of his usual speeches. First, he will put both hands on the Dispatch Box, making a great show of the fact that he has no notes before him. His speech will be delivered with great style. There will no stopping the endless flow of words, but none of them will answer any of the questions. It will be words, words, words. There will be no substance at all. That is why the hon. Gentleman's speeches are so rarely quoted in the press —because they have no substance at all. Part of his speech, of course, has been prepared — a few cheap jibes about the Labour party with which he will hope to win a few smiles and little warmth from the Conservative Benches, and no doubt he will succeed. Perhaps that will make up for the fact that he did not obtain a Cabinet seat and remains the best Secretary of State that Scotland never had.

The Minister will have nothing to say about the deep concern that has rightly been expressed today about the 6 per cent. cut in real terms in the EC food aid budget. On this very important day when, as the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and others have pointed out, many of us have been meeting the food aid lobby, I hope that the Minister will show some concern about Africa. I hope that he will show more concern than the shocking complacency of the Minister who opened the debate in Brussels and was reported as saying that, as the rains had now brought an end to the famine, there was no need to worry about further food aid there. That view is tragically wrong and I am sorry that the Minister concerned did not have the grace to apologise to the House for words which, spoken by a British Minister, will be taken to represent a British view of what has happened.

As we know full well, the budget proposed by the Commission left food aid at the same level as last year, but Ministers proposed a cut of 130 million ecu. That means a 6 per cent. cut in the food aid budget at a time when famine continues in Ethiopia and other parts of Africa. Sadly, it was left to the Irish and the Danes to call for a generous increase in food aid and the Italians and Greeks both rejected the budget at least partly on the same grounds.

It is a pity that Britain was not among those countries which asked for an increase in food aid when that small amount of money — the £290 million proposed by the Commission and subsequently cut — compares so badly with the £12 billion going to CAP agricultural support. It contrasts badly with the surpluses which continue to exist when 1 million tonnes of butter are insanely fed back to the very animals which produced it, when ships with cold storage facilities are being hired in France, Italy and Ireland to hold yet more surplus beef and when the surplus of cereals continues to rise.

Much has been said in the House in the past about the obscenity of the surpluses. The hon. Member for Southend, East was entirely correct in his argument that it is not so much the existence of surpluses as the fact that world commodity prices are held down by over-production in the Community, that makes it impossible for Third world countries to earn the foreign exchange that they badly need to pay off their debts or to bring about investment in their own countries. I hope that the Minister of State will say something about Britain's performance on the 1986 budget and that what he says will go some way towards putting right the wrongs perpetrated in our actions in cutting part of the 1986 budget.

We have before us a Bill to lend the Community another £250 million as a face-saving device for the German agriculture minister who last June vetoed the cereal price cut. Even more important, do we not have here a Bill that throws away the trump card which the Prime Minister once brandished? Hon. Members asked what has changed between 1 July and now which makes the Prime Minister and the Government prepared to put forward a Bill to allow Parliament to consent to an increase in the United Kingdom's VAT contributions without ensuring an effective budgetary discipline. Does this not mean that the

Prime Minister will go on to play sister bountiful to the Community? A long time ago, in November 1979, the Prime Minister said:

> "I must be absolutely clear about this . . . I cannot play sister bountiful to the Community when my own electorate are being asked to forgo improvements in the fields of health, education, welfare and the rest."

Interestingly enough, hon. Members on both sides of the House have admitted that they have experienced cuts in health, education and welfare in their own constituencies. They are rightly concerned about those cuts. All they see is a 1985 budget in which we give even more; we give £1·2 billion to the common agricultural policy yet we cannot find the odd £100 million that might be needed urgently for the Health Service somewhere in this country or as a small part of the cure for the state of our schools and educational system.

The money is always there for the Community. It is not there for the needs which all hon. Members have referred to in the debate. Contrary to what she once said, the Prime Minister is prepared to play sister bountiful to the Community. She knows full well that she will go on playing sister bountiful. She is no fool; she knows that the budgetary discipline is shot full of holes. She knows full well that rules which allow for exceptional circumstances and aberrant conditions to justify price increases do not mean budgetary discipline. Of course she is aware of that, but she is prepared to take the consequence, which is to go on playing sister bountiful to the Community. She must know that she has thrown away the one important opportunity that she had of putting pressure on the Community to reform fundamentally the CAP.

Unless that is done, there is no hope of budgetary discipline, yet the Commission is proposing only adjustments to agricultural policy. Any suggestion that price support be cut is met with the utmost resistance by the Commission, just as it will be by many agriculture Ministers.

The Prime Minister knows full well, as does the Minister of State if only he would admit it, that the 1986 budget cannot possibly be confined to the ceiling laid down by budgetary discipline. It is bound to overrun. The Minister knows that that budget will bring significant political problems in its train.

Hon. Members rightly said that the budget covers only 10 Community members. What will happen with the entry of Spain and Portugal? These are fundamental questions, and they are not just economic. We are not just talking about millions of ecu. There will be political consequences of proposing budgets such as this leaving out those two countries. What answers has the Minister for the fundamental questions raised by the 1986 proposals?

I hope that we shall hear a different speech from the Minister today. I hope that we shall hear some answers. Unless he provides them, Conservative Members will vote against him or abstain. I hope that they are many because we know that the Government have no answers and that the Bill ought never to have been brought forward. It should be rejected firmly.

9.46 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): It was extremely kind of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) to reply to the debate by almost exclusively trying to anticipate my speech. I regret to say that she will be disappointed because I intend to concentrate on answering many of the important issues that have been raised.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and some of his colleagues made some extraordinary propositions. He and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) suggested that we were debating the Bill's Third Reading at this stage in the Session because of some extraordinary last-minute change of strategy by the Prime Minister in the light of the Milan summit. A more extraordinary example of fantasy from Opposition Benches it would be difficult to contemplate. Nothing at the Milan summit and nothing that flows from it has the slightest effect on the Government's views about desirability of the House approving the Bill.

The hon. Member for Hamilton spent a considerable time attacking my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury for decisions that were taken at the Budget Council concerning food aid. He and the hon. Member for Thurrock suggested that they reflected a heartless approach by the Government. He should remind the country that a substantial majority of Ministers at the Budget Council made that decision. The hon. Gentleman's accusations are absurd. It was decided to agree a level of food aid equivalent to the historically high level of the current year. The point at issue was not whether the Community would respond to an emergency with adequate food aid but whether, in addition to the normal food aid programme, there should be a new mechanism for a parallel food programme. The majority of members of the Council of Ministers in the Budget Council thought that emergency aid should be provided through the normal programme of the food aid available through the Community, which can be increased if necessary and if emergencies require it.

The hon. Gentleman's third point, which other hon. Members have also raised, was that somehow the Foreign Secretary misled the House by not saying that the figure of £1,200 million of net contribution, which appears in the Budget White Paper, was the appropriate one. It was suggested that that has only been revealed in recent months. The earlier figure to which the hon. Gentleman referred was the one in the Public Expenditure White Paper based on the financial year. The figure of £1,200 million reflects the calendar year and is a different reference. As my hon. Friend the Minister correctly and cogently pointed out, the reason for the unduly high sum this year is primarily that two, not one, intergovernmental agreements have to be included in the figure, as well as overseas aid and other temporary considerations. Those important factors are highly relevant to the matter.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) asked specifically about the implications for Portugal and Spain arising from their accession to the Community. The position agreed in the accession negotiations, which will be honoured, is simply that for Spain there will be financial neutrality, while Portugal will become net modest beneficiaries. It is intended that that should be honoured from the moment when they enter the Community.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) asked a specific question which was not answered during our last debate because I had not properly understood his question. He asked whether, if part of the 1,000 million ecu, which is to be our refund for the current year, had to be paid in cash because of the way in which

[Mr. Rifkind]

the system operates, there was a guarantee that that sum would be paid and whether interest would be paid on it. The guarantee that the sum will be paid is found in the fact that the sum is in the 1985 budget, which has been approved, and also in the own resources decision, which, under the terms agreed, will come into effect immediately on ratification of the own resources decision by all the member states. There is no provision for interest in the own resources decision and, therefore, no interest will be paid on that sum. But there is a guarantee that the sum will be made available.

Mr. Higgins: Why is no interest being paid since we paid the sum before we had to and we are getting it back later?

Mr. Rifkind: When the figure of 1,000 million ecu was fixed—the last occasion on which the rebate was a fixed sum — the delay in its payment was not anticipated. The payment is guaranteed, but interest is not provided for in the original agreement. Moreover, I believe that there is no tradition of interest being paid on such payments.

Mr. Higgins: Why not?

Mr. Rifkind: I have given the answer, and on another occasion we may develop the question whether an alternative approach would be preferable. At present that is the legal position. There were a series — *[Interruption.]* That was the position in the own resources decision. The basis on which we are entitled to that sum flows from that decision and, therefore, the question of interest must be determined under it.

Speeches from Opposition Members and some Conservative Members pointed to various defects in the way in which the European Community operates. The Government do not dissent from many of the criticisms. There is no disagreement about the fact that there are many defects in the Community. However, differences exist about the best way of rectifying those problems. Primarily Opposition Members, but also some Conservative Members, are essentially opposed to British membership of the Community and do not wish to see it reformed. *[Interruption.]* If the House will allow me to explain, hon. Members will find that there is no basic disagreement on this. Many Opposition Members and some Conservative Members are hostile to our membership of the Community, and passionately desire to see the United Kingdom out of the Community. No one will dispute that. I also accept that many Conservative Members consider themselves to be committed believers in the Community, want it to be successful, and want Britain to be a member state. I address my remarks primarily to them, because they have the most open minds on the issue. I say to those who consider themselves to be in that position that they and the Government must consider what is the most effective way of ensuring that the interests of the Community and of the United Kingdom are best safeguarded.

I hope that my hon. Friends share the Government's view that in a Community of 10 members it is impossible for all the United Kingdom's objectives to be achieved in one go. I hope that most of my hon. Friends acknowledge that the Government have achieved a substantial amount through the Fontainebleau agreement. We have ensured massive rebates for the United Kingdom and I say to my hon. Friends and to Opposition Members who wish to listen that if, in the real world, it is not possible to achieve all the reforms within the period that we should like to achieve them, the minimum requirement that the nation would expect of the Government is that we should at least ensure that, until all the reforms can be achieved, we provide the maximum protection for the United Kingdom taxpayer. That is what the Government have achieved.

Hon. Members know that as a result of the Fontainebleau agreement, which the Bill incorporates, Germany will pay 32 per cent. of any increase of the net expenditure of the Community and France will pay 26 per cent. of any such increase, but the United Kingdom will pay only 7 per cent. instead of the 21 per cent. that we paid before the Fontainebleau summit.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend says that there are defects in the Community. One is that if the Community is given a glimpse, a sniff or a sight of more money, it will spend that money. We have seen that tonight. Will my hon. Friend enhance his reputation and save hon. Members many sleepless nights in the House by saying that under no circumstances will the Government agree to any further subventions, IGAs or handouts to the Community?

Mr. Rifkind: If my hon. Friend had listened to what has been said, he would be aware that 93 per cent. of the payments required to finance any additional net expenditure of the Community will have to be found by other member states. The suggestion that the United Kingdom will be the only member state interested in economy or budgetary discipline does not accord with the facts. Through the Fontainebleau agreement we are protected more than any other member state. The House recognised that fact when it voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Fontainebleau mechanism some time ago.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend please leave his optimistic generalities for a moment and tell us what evidence there is from the past three months to show that there is a sustained political will within the Community to reform the common agricultural policy?

Mr. Rifkind: I think that my hon. Friend will admit that a fascinating and long overdue feature of not just the last few months, but the past three years is that on each occasion when the price fixing of the European Community has been determined, the debate has been not about increases, but about cuts. We have had cuts in real terms in each of the past three years.

Even this year, when Germany was holding out against the other nine members of the Community, it was significant that the dispute was not about the size of an increase in agricultural prices, but about the size of the cut that should take place. All member states, including Germany, accepted that some cut was inevitable and nine states wanted a more substantial cut than Germany.

Mr. Deakins: Does the assurance just given by the Minister apply to sums raised by intergovernmental agreements?

Mr. Rifkind: The inter-governmental agreement must be lawful and any group of member states can agree to finance expenditure in that form, subject always to approval by their national Parliaments. Precisely for that

reason, one of the Bill's provisions ensures that the United Kingdom payment will be made only if Parliament's approval is obtained.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting the European Communities (Finance) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question again proposed. That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Rifkind: Some hon. Members asked whether the intergovernmental conference has any relevance. The two sessions of the conference that have taken place show that, despite a multitude of amendments, not one would diminish the national veto, a major pre-occupation for the United Kingdom. The discussions so far have identified the extent to which increasingly member states are concentrating on more realistic options rather than on the wilder fantasies which have been a feature of such debates.

Mr. Forth: Have proposals at the intergovernmental conference been made for increases in the European Parliament's powers? I ask that because the European Parliament has attempted to increase Community expenditure each year. Will my hon. Friend comment on proposals for increases in the European Parliament's authority since that might have a bearing on future Community budgets?

Mr. Rifkind: Proposals for increasing the European Parliament's powers have been made. The United Kingdom has made it clear that, although we want the European Parliament to have a useful role, we do not believe that the case has been made for increasing its powers in a significant or substantial form. I am happy to say that that is the view of the majority of member states.

One of the most attractive features of the Fontainebleau package is that for the first time the European Parliament will have no power to interfere with payments to the United Kingdom. In recent years the Parliament has exercised that power in a negligent and irresponsible fashion. That power will cease to exist because of the Prime Minister's achievements at the Fontainebleau summit.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister has told the House about the various propositions that the Government oppose. Can he say whether the Government are proposing anything?

Mr. Rifkind: We have proposed many changes which do not require treaty amendment because they would be quicker to implement. We shall consider any suggestions which require treaty amendment on merit, and if they are thought to be in the United Kingdom's interests or in the interests of the Community as a whole, we shall make a positive response. At this stage, we continue to believe that changes that do not require treaty amendment will be quicker to implement, and therefore should command greater attention.

The debate has concentrated on the anxieties understandably expressed by many hon. Members about what they believe to be defects in the way in which the Community operates. The Government have never maintained that the Community is in an ideal form or that there is no cause for concern. However, we believe that the Fontainebleau package offers the British taxpayer unprecedented protection against increases in expenditure by the Community by ensuring that 93 per cent. of any additional expenditure has to be paid by other member states.

Over the next three years it is expected that £2·6 billion will be refunded to the United Kingdom by reductions in our contributions. That is an achievement that eluded the Labour party through all the years that it was in office. It did not achieve a single, solitary ecu for the United Kingdom when in office.

The Government are quite content to appeal to the House to support the Bill on the basis of what we have achieved so far and what we are seeking to achieve over the years to come. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 307, Noes 190.

Division No. 295] **[10.05 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney

Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Body, Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hawksley, Warren
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Whitfield, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Local Government (Scotland)

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 3) Order 1985, dated 2nd July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

The order has two purposes. The first is to adjust the amount of rate support grant payable to Scottish local authorities in respect of 1984-85, increasing it by £28·9 million. The second is to reduce the amount of grant payable in respect of 1985-86 by £126·6 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced his decision to make these changes in grant in his statement of 27 June and the order before us was laid a week afterwards. Before dealing with the details of the order, I should like to set out the background and the circumstances which make this order necessary.

Local authority expenditure accounts for half of the expenditure for which the Secretary of State is responsible. Control of such a significant part of his programme has always been an important task for a Secretary of State under any Government. Since coming to office we have made our policy clear: that public expenditure has to come down and that local authority expenditure as a major component of public expenditure has to be reduced. Despite this, no reduction has taken place in local authority expenditure. Although the rate of growth has flattened, in volume terms expenditure is still 1·8 per cent. above the level it was in 1978-79. In cost terms—measured against the inflation rate in the economy as a whole—the equivalent figure is 10·6 per cent.

As my right hon. Friend told the House in July, Scottish local authorities are planning to overspend in 1985-86 by £91 million, or 3·2 per cent. This is less than the overspend against budgets in 1984-85 when authorities planned to overspend by £114 million, or 4·2 per cent. This is a welcome sign that authorities are gradually coming closer to our plans. However, it must be recognised that the main contribution towards closing the gap was made by the Secretary of State increasing expenditure provision for 1985-86 by £98 million—a move to which there was a disappointing response by many local authorities. The result is that the planned overspending in 1985-86 is still much higher than we can accept.

In 1984-85 the total of grant penalties was 78 per cent. and no authority suffered a grant penalty of more than 100 per cent., however high its overspending. My right hon. Friend warned that penalties in 1985-86 would be more severe. This year the total of grant penalties is 138 per cent. of overspend, with grant penalties on individual authorities going up to 170 per cent. of overspend. I accept that these penalties are severe, but my right hon. Friend gave authorities ample warning, writing individually last year to every provost and convener. It was a warning that did not go entirely unheeded, since 30 authorities budgeted at guideline in 1985-86 compared with 15 in 1984-85. However, this throws into sharper relief the continued overspending of the remaining authorities. It is still, of course, open to the overspending authorities to reduce their overspending and produce a real benefit for their ratepayers. If their overspending is reduced at outturn, under the new arrangements that we introduced last year, the penalty will be reduced and grant paid back to authorities in direct proportion to their improvement.

I should now like to turn to the order and to the details of what I have been describing in general terms.

The order falls into two parts. First, it reduces the grant payable to all authorities which planned to overspend in 1985-86. That is done by reducing the total of aggregate Exchequer grant by £126·6 million, and within that the needs element has been reduced by the same amount. For the 35 overspending authorities, the needs element has been reduced according to a tariff which starts at a grant loss of 70 per cent. of overspend, rising to a 90 per cent. grant loss for a 1 per cent. overspend, 110 per cent. for 2 per cent. and on an increasing scale to a maximum of 170 per cent. for a 3·5 per cent. excess and above. Annex 2 of the report on the order explains the tariff and illustrates it with a graph. The individual authority penalties are shown in column 7 of page 8. The 30 authorities on or within guidelines suffer no penalty at all.

It has been suggested, and I suspect that it will be suggested tonight, that only small authorities can spend within guidelines. However, the 30 authorities within guideline include seven of the 12 regional and island authorities, among them Grampian regional council. Among the districts planning to spend at guideline, I was particularly glad to note that Stirling district council, which has in the past planned to overspend by substantial amounts, has this year budgeted within guidelines. So has Kirkcaldy district council, which was the subject of selective action in 1983-84.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Minister acknowledge that Grampian regional council has pointed out that, if it is to meet the essential roads programme to deal with its traffic problems, the guidelines that are being allocated will be £30 million short? It has put in a special application and asks that the Government look kindly on the fact that it is Conservative controlled and deserves fairer treatment.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that road construction is a capital item, and plainly we study closely the bids that authorities make to us at about this time of the year before we decide their capital allocations. We shall do so this year as we have in the past, in the light of the bids that are made to us by all authorities in Scotland and available resources.

The opportunity is there for authorities above guideline to think again about their expenditure even at this stage. There is a real incentive for authorities to look for savings in order to reduce their grant penalty at outturn. Some authorities have already realised that and are reducing their expenditure, and the second part of this order illustrates the value of this in respect of 1984-85.

The second part of the order revises the penalties for that year. At the request of the convention, it does that much earlier in the year than before by using provisional outturn figures and making an interim revision combining the adjustment for the previous year's penalties with the imposition of the current year's. Incidentally, that new arrangement is a clear illustration of the extent to which we do pay close attention to the views of COSLA during our regular consultation meetings. The second part of the order gives back to authorities almost £29 million of the

£90 million penalty imposed in 1984-85 in recognition of the reduction in spending between budget and provisional outturn.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Minister stop boring the House with all this financial gobbledegook and tell us something about the social and human implications of this devastating cut in local government expenditure? Is he aware that, a few days after the Secretary of State made the announcement in June, he went with Her Majesty the Queen to the opening of the new Mariner centre in Falkirk? Falkirk district council has told me that as a result of the cut in local government expenditure if it is to meet the Secretary of State's guideline on leisure and recreation it will have to close the Mariner centre, the Hallglen centre and the Grangemouth stadium. Is that not an insult to Her Majesty the Queen, Falkirk district council and the people of Falkirk district?

Mr. Ancram: I am obviously delighted to hear of the new-found concerns of the hon. Member, but I have to say that for him to describe over six years in cost terms a 10·6 per cent. increase as a dramatic cut really does defy explanation. The simple fact is that local authorities in real terms, however they are calculated, are still spending more in Scotland than in 1978-79, and it was not a Conservative Minister who, as long ago as 1976, told councils that the party was over. The fact is that the party continued after that, and it is only just now being brought under control.

When my right hon. Friend announced the penalties for 1984-85, he urged local authorities to bring their expenditure down to guideline so that their ratepayers would benefit from the grant being restored. I was pleased to see that 14 of the 15 authorities which budgeted within guideline stayed within their budgets and a further 13 authorities which had budgeted above guideline brought their expenditure down within it. Most authorities spent less than they had budgeted for and part of the grant penalty is being restored to them. Members will find the list of authorities unaffected by penalties at both budget and provisional outturn stage in annex 3 of the report on the order, the revised penalties in column 6 of annex 4, the original penalty in column 7 and the difference between them in column 8.

Unfortunately, a few authorities actually increased their spending between budget and outturn, and that has increased their penalty.

On 10 October we issued current expenditure guidelines for 1986-87 to all authorities. I believe that these guidelines are fair and achievable. They give greater recognition to the client group assessments of relative expenditure need than in the past. The assessments continue to be refined in consultation with the convention. Twenty-one authorities will in 1986-87 have guidelines identical with their assessments, almost double the number in the current year. At the suggestion of the convention, we have retained an unallocated margin to ensure that no authority is expected to make an unrealistic cut from its present level of expenditure. We have also recognised the concern of authorities, also expressed in the House last year, whose guidelines remain below assessed need. Their guidelines will be set at 7 per cent. above their present level of spending, somewhat above the present forecast rate of inflation. Penalties for overspending these guidelines will be severe and I would strongly urge authorities, many of which will be at the formative stage of their budgets, to plan now to spend within the guidelines. We have no desire to impose large grant penalties in 1986-87. It is in everyone's interest to look for ways of bringing expenditure down to guidelines and thereby making penalties unnecessary. That is our wish and local authorities have it in their own hands to achieve it.

The aim of the order is to apply pressure to local authorities to bring their expenditure into line with the Government's plans, an aim which has been common to all Governments. The basis on which this is done is much fairer than the simple reduction in total grant used by the Labour party when it was in power and faced a similar problem. Increasing numbers of authorities are now budgeting in line with guidelines. There is a real incentive for them to do so. I hope that in 1986-87 the number will be still further increased. The order is designed to put pressure on authorities to spend in line with provision. It does so in a fair and increasingly effective way and I commend it to the House.

10.33 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Minister made it clear that he is really seeking to reduce public expenditure. I thought it significant that he did not say that he is hoping to reduce income tax, because I wonder at times how a Government who have had the windfall of North sea oil, have creamed off more indirect taxation from VAT and the rating system and have had the benefit of the rake-off from the sale of public assets still cannot substantially reduce income tax. This state of affairs is a measure of the Government's industrial incompetence and social malevolence.

One of the points that emerges from these guidelines has been the difficulties facing education authorities in Scotland in meeting the guidelines that the men—and the women—in St. Andrew's house set down for them. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) will develop this point, but it would be useful if the Minister could tell us what consultation there has been with COSLA over the salaries settlement that the Government hope to achieve with the teaching profession in Scotland, so as to avoid a difficulty for authorities in the coming years over the operation of the penalty system that the Government have instituted.

We accuse the Government of deliberately destroying the working relationship that is essential to good dealing between Government and local authorities. There has not been a time in living memory when relationships between local authorities and the Scottish Office have been so bad. Matters reached the stage where there was a special meeting of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the deteriorating relationship. I understand that COSLA is setting up a tribunal to inquire into the current state of local government in Scotland. There is a touch of irony in the fact that in the very month that that was announced Lord Wheatley announced that he was going to retire from the Court of Session. I do not know whether he will be invited to chair the tribunal, but I would not wish such a disappointing retirement on anybody.

Twenty years ago the Wheatley commission examined the structure and role of local authorities, recommending that they have the power to get on with the job, having the ability to do it effectively, looking after local democracy and at the same time involving local participation. It is

[Mr. Jim Craigen]

significant that now all those things have been thrown to the wind and there is a terrible relationship between local authorities and the Government.

In the annual report issued by Strathclyde regional council I noted the words of councillor Dick Stewart, who I think the House will agree has had a lifetime of distinguished service in local government. He said:

"For 1986-87 the prospects for local government are even more grave with Government providing for an increase of only 3·9 per cent. in local authority spending in Scotland against an anticipated inflation rate of 5 per cent."

That is consistent with the Government's approach to rate support grant, reducing the percentage and lowering the indexation year after year. Moreover, it is significant that Dick Stewart says that the number of people on supplementary benefit has increased by 86 per cent. since the Government came to office, and the number of divorces has gone up by 50 per cent., with the havoc that that wreaks in many households.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Craigen: I shall not give way.

We accuse the Government of shifting the burden of expenditure and the blame for their own policies on to the ratepayers and the local authorities respectively.

COSLA has provided us with some interesting figures. Had the Government maintained the level of rate support grant in 1980-81 the possible reduction in the average domestic rates bill would have been £97 in Dumfries and Galloway, where the average domestic rate bill for 1985-86 is £285. In north-east Fife the average domestic rates bill for 1985-86 is £422. That could have been £107 less had the Government sustained the same rate support grant that operated in 1980-81.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if Fife regional council had set a rate based on guidelines the ratepayers of north-east Fife would have had to pay 10p in the pound less in this years rates bill?

Mr. Craigen: Of course, the figures that I am quoting do not suit the hon. Member.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): What would the rate of inflation be if there had been a free-for-all in local government expenditure?

Mr. Craigen: Nobody has suggested there would be a free for all. The Government set the approved relevant expenditure and the rate support grant. I know that the hon. Member is delighted that he is getting a cross barrier in the A74, but he must accept that his own ratepayers are being done down as a result of the withdrawal of Government support. I will deal later with Eastwood. The average domestic rates bill there for 1985-86 is £663, and that could have been reduced by £147 if the Government had kept the same rate support grant. These are significant figures.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member is quoting figures which have been produced for hon. Members for today's debate and which, as I am sure he realises, depend on the assumption that, if rate support grant were maintained at a steady proportion, expenditure would not increase. The history of local government finance does not suggest that is true. During the four years under the previous Labour Government when grant was held steady at 68·5 per cent., expenditure rose by £240 million in real terms. Those are the facts.

Mr. Craigen: The Under-Secretary of State chose to intervene because he is so embarrassed by the figures I have quoted. The average ratepayer in Scotland would be £74 per annum better off if the Government had maintained the same rate of support grant as that which operated in 1980-81.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I am outraged at what the Minister has said. I have before me the minutes of the Scottish Affairs Committee which dealt with this question, and Councillor Fagan, who was the vice-chairman of COSLA at that time, asked the Minister and his officials about the £1,000 million that they filched from local government in the cutbacks on rate support grant. The Secretary of State for Scotland passed the buck to his officials. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"Could I ask Mr. Penman to say something about the £1,000 million figure you have quoted, Mr. Chairman."

Mr. Penman said:

"Could I say that I think that there is no disagreement between the Scottish Office and COSLA on the arithmetic."

That was the £1,000 million filched out of the Scottish economy by those gangsters on the Government Benches.

Mr. Craigen: My hon. Friend has mentioned gangsters. The £1,000 million the Government took out of the system makes the great train robbers seem like petty pilferers. Had the Government sustained the rate support grant at its 1980-81 level, they would have done immense good to the commercial and industrial ratepayers as well as to the domestic ratepayers of Scotland.

The Government have determined the approved total of expenditure and the Government have to hand the disbursement among the 65 local authorities in Scotland of that rate support grant. The Minister talked about guidelines, but one of the concerns of COSLA is the way in which the guidelines have been fluctuating, not just from year to year, but among the various authorities. For example, he may be able to enlighten us as to why in Eastwood the fluctuation has been so considerable from year to year. It is going up by 16·4 per cent. next year, although it will give Glasgow only an extra 1·7 per cent. An angry Conservative association executive may have had a good deal to do with that. I hope that the Minister will tell us more about how these things come about because I suspect that the guidelines are more of an art than a science in the way in which they are operated at the Scottish Office.

We accuse the Government of vindictiveness in determining the scale of the penalties. Even Shylock wanted only a pound of flesh, but in many instances the Secretary of State for Scotland wants £1·70 and there is certainly no Portia at No. 10 Downing street. There is no explanation for the treatment of seven of the 34 authorities in which expenditure needs are greater than the guidelines and 10 of the 34 authorities in which expenditure is less in real terms than in 1978-79. The Government are ignoring the requirements for services that Parliament has laid down to be fulfilled by local authorities and it is astonishing that even the funding of voluntary bodies is now being affected because of the cuts in local authority expenditure.

The Minister quotes chapter and verse about local authorities keeping to guidelines, but perhaps he will tell

us today how such miscalculations can occur at the Scottish Office in relation to a mere £50 million in terms of the revaluation relief package announced at the Conservative party conference in Perth. The Secretary of State would have done Paul Daniels out of a job with the scheme that he described at Perth. We understand that the take-up will be only £29 million. When one thinks of the song and dance act that the Chancellor did over that £50 million, one cannot see why he lost any sleep over it.

Here we are talking about £90 million in excess of the guidelines for more than £3 billion expenditure by the 65 local authorities in Scotland. The Minister should recognise the gross disparity between his own incompetence in relation to the revaluation relief package and the general approach of the local authorities in doing their damndest to keep within the guidelines. We know that from year to year the outturn is invariably lower than the authorities' original estimates. That is why the Minister can tell us today that £28·5 million in rate support settlement is to be repaid for last year.

We shall oppose the order, but we want to hear a bit less from the Under-Secretary of State about the great things to come in terms of reforming the system and a bit more about the inconsistencies between him and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who is to take the high road and produce a go-it-alone Scottish reform while the Under-Secretary of State works with the other two wise men and realises that he will have to keep in tandem with a United Kingdom approach.

The Government are not giving the ratepayers of Scotland a fair deal and they are not getting the best out of local authorities by the shameful way in which they are dealing with them on a day-to-day basis. Above all, the Government are not being open and honest with the public about the extent to which the culprit in terms of higher local authority expenditure is in fact the Scottish Office which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) has said, has filched more than £1 billion from the system.

10.49 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) did much name-dropping, from Portia to Houdini. He seemed to be remote from what the people in Scotland are interested in—paying less rates. The only thing on which I agree with him is that it is good that in the long term the Government will try to make local government finance more simple and to reform the system of rates. I am glad my hon. Friend has given the assurance that we shall have that legislation before us in the not too distant future.

Of course it has been a difficult year for local authorities and Government in regard to local government finance. It is easy to say, as the hon. Member for Maryhill is keen to, "Give them as much rate support grant as they want." It is more difficult to insist that public expenditure is kept within bounds to contain inflation. Many people fail to realise that local government expenditure is just as much public expenditure as central Government expenditure. If either goes up, inflation will rise. Opposition Members, who are in a hungry-looking mood tonight, will be only too glad to welcome the fact that inflation is so low, considering the roaring inflation they left with us in 1979.

Within the constraint of maintaining low inflation over the last few years, I want a fairer distribution of the rate support grant, particularly for rural areas. I have been critical of the elusive formula, which I do not understand, which produces guidelines for needs elements, for resources element, for the budget, and relevant expenditure, which are all seriously affected by revaluation. I am not surprised that few people understand local government finance.

The Government are moving in the right direction to get the formula right. The two districts that I represent within Dumfries and Galloway will be much happier in the coming financial year than they have been in the past. The formula for 1985-86 that was published the other day is much more favourable.

Mr. McKelvey: I share with the hon. Gentleman concern about the formula that is used for the guidelines. Since he is happy with the formula, can he tell me what percentage the Government have used for inflation in that formula? Until now I have been baffled. The Government do not seem to have taken account of the rate of inflation.

Sir Hector Monro: I am sure the Minister will be delighted to deal with that question. I did not say that I understood the formula; I said that I was pleased that it was more favourable for rural areas.

I am glad that the Minister was able to see Nithsdale district council representatives with my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) and myself only last week to discuss the matter. Nithsdale was naturally disappointed that it was receiving only 83 per cent. of assessed need. Of the 27 authorities with guidelines below assessed needs, no fewer than 19 have been able to keep their expenditure within guidelines. It can be done. It is painful, but the penalties of which some authorities are complaining can be avoided. I hope that, after our constructive meeting with Nithsdale, it will achieve its guideline and avoid the penalties that it would have to make under the present scheme.

Beyond the difficulties of the current year I see a great deal of light and good news. I am glad that, next year, Nithsdale will have a 15·6 per cent. increase. That is far above the rate of inflation and no Opposition member can say that it is an unfair settlement. Annandale is to receive a 7 per cent. increase and the region, Dumfries and Galloway, is to receive a 7·4 per cent. increase. Authorities that husband their resources well receive good guidelines. All authorities should aim for that.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): What about the farmers?

Sir Hector Monro: Even the hon. Gentleman must know that this has been the wettest August and September in living memory. I hope that he has been writing to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland asking for financial assistance to help an industry that is important to Scotland through a peculiarly difficult time. If the hon. Gentleman fails in his reponsibilities to his constituents, I am sure it will be reflected at the next election.

The Government have listened to the representations of COSLA and individual local authorities, and that is reflected in the coming year's settlement. We must all welcome that. It is wrong to say that the Government cut everything, because, in real terms, much more is being spent on health and other services. We all know that it is not true that they are being cut to ribbons, as Opposition Members say, weekend after weekend.

[Sir Hector Monro]

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister have done a first-class job in difficult economic circumstances by presenting a settlement that helps the country. All public expenditure is counted in inflation, and reducing inflation is the best way in which to provide jobs in the long run—and that is what we are determined to do.

10.58 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I have made my views about this pernicious system of penalties clear many times and I do not intend to deal with the matter in any detail. I should like to concentrate on one aspect of the crisis in the relationships between the Government and local government in relation to the dispute about teachers' salaries, about which there were exchanges in the House earlier today.

The real crisis in the rating system and local authority finance has arisen because of the Government's continued cutting of the amounts and the rates of grant during the past six years. Irrespective of whether we reform the system, it will not operate satisfactorily unless a proper relationship between central and local government is established. The Government's crises and troubles are the direct result of their actions during the past six years.

I shall deal with teachers' salaries and the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) about inflation assumptions in the figures imposed in the Government's guidelines.

At one time Government disclosed the inflation assumptions, but now they are careful not to disclose them. From the little information from central Government, we know that in every year since 1979 the inflation assumptions have been less than the actual inflation outturn. That is the main reason why we have the so-called excesses of budgets over Government guidelines. It is all right for Government to talk about inadequate inflation factors, but local authorities which pay the bills must make realistic assumptions in the budgets they prepare.

A major budget item is the assumption about pay increases in the forthcoming year. Already, because of the agreement reached with local authority manual workers, Scottish local authorities are faced with additional expenditure in the current year. Expenditure for authorities which are suffering penalties is multiplied. For example, if an authority pays any group of workers 1 per cent. more than it has assumed in its budget and, like Strathclyde, has a grant penalty of 1·65 per cent., the extra 1 per cent. will cost the authority 2·65 per cent.—1 per cent. for the workers and the 1·65 per cent. deduction in rate support grant. That is one of the particularly pernicious effects of the system, which operates in relation to the teachers' dispute. Opposition Members judge the Secretary of State's anxiety to settle the teachers' dispute, and to get teachers back to school and education back to normal, in that context.

One of the ironies is that if the dispute is not settled in the current year—we must all profoundly hope that there will be a settlement—and local authorities do not have to pay any increase to teachers for which they have budgeted, those authorities will save the teachers' increase and receive penalties back. If no increase is payable, for example, in Strathclyde region, which may have assumed 6 per cent. for a teachers' salaries increase in the current year, it will get that 6 per cent. back with a further 10 per cent. It will get 16 per cent. back simply because there is no settlement. Could there be a more absurd system of local government than that? There is actually a financial incentive to local authorities, which I am glad to say they are not taking advantage of, not to reach a settlement in the current year. That is absurd.

The system is particularly pernicious when local authorities want to make a generous settlement with employees. Unless there is an increase in the relevant expenditure and unless the penalties are removed, any act of generosity towards the teachers or another group—by that I mean any act intended to be fair and just—will be penalised twice or three times under the order. Certainly the major Scottish authorities will all suffer penalties under the order.

It is nonsense to claim, as the Secretary of State claimed earlier, that he is not involved, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) pointed out, he is a member of the negotiating committee. The right hon. Gentleman has his representatives there. In addition, he effectively controls the total offer made to the teachers, partly by his contribution through the rate support grant and even more because of the operation of the penalty system.

There was some justice in an arrangement under which the Secretary of State said, "I am willing to pay so much and if you wish to pay more you can pay it out of the rates." But local authorities do not now have that freedom. If they wish to pay more, they not only pay the extra, with no contribution from the Secretary of State, but they pay penalties on top of that. It costs them two or three times as much as it would under any sensible system of local government finance.

The Secretary of State pretended in the House this afternoon that the reason why he did not grant an independent pay review was that the teachers did not wish to include pay and conditions in the review. But even if they had done so, the right hon. Gentleman would have not granted an independent pay review, because he is frightened of the independence of a review and not its exact terms of reference.

The Secretary of State has come up with £125 million over four years, which is less than the penalties being imposed in one year under this order. If the £125 million were built up gradually over the four years, the sum involved in 1986-87 — the right hon. Gentleman is giving nothing for 1985-86 — would be trivial in comparison with the need of teachers. We are told that it would be about 2·5 per cent. on the going rate. But what is the going rate?

The Government have announced today that they will no longer have pay norms for the Civil Service and presumably they intend something similar for the rest of the public sector. The pay norms have been 3 or 4 per cent. and what is the use of saying to teachers, "You can have 3 per cent. and another 2·5 per cent." when the Government may decide that next year's pay norm will be nil or 1 or 2 per cent.?

No genuine negotiations are taking place anywhere in the public sector and they are certainly not taking place with the teachers. The order is another turn of the screw for local authorities and another example of Government interference in what they pretend are free negotiations between the management and the teachers.

In any case, the extra £125 million is not extra Government cash. It is only extra relevant expenditure, of which they are paying a decreasing percentage. They have decreased the percentage of grant in every year since they took office in 1979 and I have not the slightest doubt that they will do the same next year and the year after if they are still in power. The extra money could easily be siphoned away by reductions in grants, penalties and the rest.

If the Secretary of State continues in this way, the crisis in Scottish education can only worsen. I have never known a situation like the present one in which teachers have voted to ban participation in the SCE examinations.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): Hear, hear.

Mr. Millan: The Secretary of State says, "Hear, hear," but he is the man responsible for driving teachers to that position. He has done it by a mixture of penalties on local authorities, over-control of local authority expenditure, insensitivity to the teachers' case and blatant dishonesty, which he displayed this afternoon, as he has displayed it on every occasion on which he has dealt with the teachers' pay claim.

The order is another nail in the coffins of local government democracy and Scottish education. It will have disastrous effects for many of our young people. In voting against the order, we shall be voting against the whole process of Government control over local authorities since 1979, which has produced such disastrous results. Unless the Secretary of State changes his ways —there is not the slightest sign that he will do so—he will do immeasurable damage to Scotland and particularly to Scottish education.

11.10 pm

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) displayed astonishing selective amnesia in his speech. I cannot recall exactly when he was Secretary of State for Scotland and I apologise for that, but under the Government of which he was a member teachers' pay was held back considerably compared with that of other groups of workers. When the Conservative Government came to power they had to put that right with a substantial award. The right hon. Gentleman raised that subject with characteristic boldness.

The right hon. Gentleman also seems to have forgotten that the bidding-up by one group of workers against another in pay rounds, with a consequential rise in the rate of inflation, further fuelled the inflation rate when his Government were in power. That helps no one. It creates paper increases in wages and increases dissatisfaction.

In the rate support grant settlement, although there were no negotiations this year on an annual pay increase for teachers because the EIS would not participate in discussions, provision was made for an assumed cash limit increase in teachers' salaries. Since no pay increases have been given to teachers this year what are the local authorities doing with the money? Are they spending it on something else or are they banking it for the day—not too far away—when a settlement is reached?

As the Minister said, the penalties arrangements which he introduced have persuaded Fife regional council to reduce its excessive expenditure. It is a pity that it did not reduce it much earlier. The amount by which it has reduced its excessive expenditure seems to be remarkably akin to the amount that it could have been spending on teachers' pay increases.

In the last 10 years Fife regional council has turned the lowest rated area in Scotland into the highest rated area. That has nothing to do with the rate support grant provided by the Secretary of State in that period. It is entirely the result of expenditure policy decisions by the Fife regional council as a consequence of which ratepayers this year —because of the overspend in guidelines last year and this year—will have to spend 10p in the pound more than if the council had operated on guidelines.

As a result, instead of a rates increase which, even with revaluation, could have been within the inflation rate, Fifers will have to suffer a 25 per cent. or more increase in their rates bills. Many of the ratepayers are teachers. I hope that Ministers will continue to press Fife regional council to be more responsible in its expenditures.

Assessment of the resources element seems to exacerbate the unfairness in the way in which the rating valuation system operates. I hope that Ministers will bear that in mind next year when considering at what to set the various elements.

11.15 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I intend to be brief, because experience has shown me that the Government do not intend to listen to any representations on this subject but are simply carrying out the instructions of the Treasury. This order in one of the vindictive measures with which they intend to strangle local democracy in Scotland.

The decision to penalise Scottish local authorities to the tune of £126·5 million, which is £36·5 million more than the £90 million expenditure above guidelines, will mean a further reduction in essential local services. The whole exercise, apart from exemplifying the dictatorial centralism that typifies the Government, is one in hypocrisy. It is compounded when the Minister quotes the number of authorities that have met their guidelines and pretends that they have been convinced by a rational case put forward by the Scottish Office. Everyone knows that they are deeply resentful of what the Government are doing — cutting essential services that the people of Scotland have a right to expect.

Local authorities are expected severely to cut spending while central Government are unable to achieve that. Local authorities are forced to be the instruments by which the Government attempt to hold down public expenditure to target levels.

Even the total Scottish Office budget expenditure can be split into that incurred directly and that incurred via local authorities. Between 1983-84 and 1985-86, local authority spending is expected to rise by only 1·2 per cent. That incurred directly by central Government will rise by 11·5 per cent. Those figures are taken from Scottish Office figures published in February this year.

In other Government Departments between 1983-84 and 1987-88 the pattern is expected to be the same. Expenditure on defence will rise by 22 per cent. and on law and order by 21 per cent. Overall, between those years the total will rise by 18 per cent. Yet local authorities are expected by the Secretary of State to perform the miracles that central Government are quite unable to perform.

In Scotland the expenditure guidelines have not been increased in line with inflation and the guideline figures

[Mr. Donald Stewart]

are wholly arbitrary. No one understands how they are determined. Local authorities throughout Scotland must curse the day that they were first introduced by a Labour Government. They have proved a useful and effective tool for the Tories in Scotland to manipulate and suffocate local government. My party is wholly opposed to that disgraceful treatment of local democracy.

Given indicators in recent elections and public opinion polls, the days of the Tory Administration are numbered. It gives me pleasure to say that the days of the British Administration are numbered. The other day there was a poll of 30 per cent. of people in Scotland who want a completely independent Parliament. They are now giving the issue a high priority, and that is the way that it should be. Scotland is waking up to the fact that a Scottish Parliament is absolutely necessary to protect local government in Scotland, the future of steel and coal industries and the whole of the Scottish economy.

11.18 pm

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): Listening to the Secretary of State and his team talking about Scottish local authorities, it would seem that they hold them in such contempt that I am surprised that they have not attempted to introduce legislation not only to abolish them but to have them shot. Listening to the Secretary of State, one would think that they were the devil incarnate.

We should not be here this evening discussing how little Scotland is to get; we should be sitting in Edinburgh discussing how much it should get. Even the *Glasgow Herald*, that mouthpiece of the Marxist-Leninist front, cannot be all that wrong in its recent publication.

I do not think that the electors of Scotland should look at the Secretary of State's stance on rate support grant this year in isolation. They should look at the position that he has adopted over the past four or five years. We are witnessing a deliberate downward spiral in public expenditure. Harry Truman summed it up when he remarked, "Save a buck and sacrifice the people." This situation has arisen at a time when not only was an increase in public expenditure desirable, but when it could easily have occurred in Scotland. It is nonsense for the Secretary of State to claim that there is a shortage of resources in Scotland. To the 5 million people of Scotland, that is clearly not the case.

The Conservatives have embarked on a strategy born of contempt for Scotland. Not only are they in a minority in Scotland, as they have been since 1945, but it looks likely that after the next election they will be in an even smaller minority. They also have a contempt for compassion. They have indulged this year, as they have in the last three or four years, in a basic arithmetical exercise in which need and compassion do not feature.

My hon. Friends have said, and I repeat, that embodied in the Government's proposals is a contempt for democracy. They talk about decentralisation and privatisation, but apparently such concepts apply only to those who agree with the Government. Those who oppose them have restrictions—called guidelines—imposed on them. They may be called guidelines, but they are mandatory dictates giving no room for manoeuvre.

I would not be surprised if at some time in the not too distant future a Minister at the Scottish Office, or at any rate in the Cabinet, adopted towards Scotland the attitude that has been taken towards the GLC and other local authorities that have had the audacity to oppose Conservative policies. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that no such attempt will be made to abolish Scottish local authorities?

The Government have given up all pretence of matching rate support grant with inflation. Whereas we are talking about a 2 per cent. increase in Scotland this year, an increase of 6 to 7 per cent. is needed, and if there had been a 7 to 8 per cent. increase in the last five or six years we should nevertheless just be standing still. But many of us in Scotland, unlike the Conservatives, do not just want to stand still. We would like to expand and improve our services. Not only are the Government prepared to see services stagnate, but with banners flying and bands playing they are happy to march backwards, producing a level of services in Scotland that has not been as bad for perhaps 25 years.

The Secretary of State has been to the top of the mountain and had his dream turned into a nightmare, and the people are suffering. He dreamt of being strong with the weak and weak with the strong. He is strong with local authorities wishing to build council houses. They have hardly built one for five years, with the result that many young couples born and brought up in decent council houses have gone into the slums and old properties that their parents left 20 years ago.

In my local authority area, Renfrew district, 10,000 people, largely youngsters, are on the housing waiting list. We have an aging population in Scotland, so that we urgently need more home helps, especially for people in the poorer and more deprived areas. We need more people in the child care, adoption and fostering services, and more staff in children's homes. I should like to hear the Minister deny that there is a need for that sort of provision. I should like to hear him tell us that there is a need for fewer staff in these services. Is there or is there not a need for these services to be expanded?

As I have said, the Secretary of State is strong with the weak and weak with the strong. He is weak when it comes to the Barratts, Brasleys and Salversons, who have been jackbooting around our towns over the past two or three years showing a blatant and open contempt for town planning. They have filled a vacuum that was created deliberately by the Secretary of State when he cut the feet from local authorities by not giving them enough money to build decent council houses of the sort that the people wanted. He created the vacuum and let his friends fill it.

The Secretary of State has been at his weakest in confronting the Treasury and the Prime Minister. He has been a poor and pathetic voice for Scotland. He has done exactly what he has been told. All that we can say in Christain humanity is that we must hope that history is kind to him and forgets him. It might be appropriate when discussing Scottish affairs to remember the words of Robert Burns, who said that we were bought and sold for English gold. That is certainly true of the Secretary of State. The tragedy is that the price is so low.

11.27 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): There is not much wrong with the Government that would not be put right by a fair voting system and a fair system of local government. *[Laughter.]* I note that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) chortles, but that is a fact. Such reforms would dramatically reduce the

false and wasteful conflict between central and local government which has been referred to by almost every Member who has participated in the debate, a conflict which the Government have done much to fuel.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) mentioned the Wheatley report. Speaking as someone who served on the Wheatley Royal Commission between 1966 and 1969, I continue enthusiastically to endorse the proposition that with the creation of larger authorities, more resources and greater functional integration, local authorities would enjoy much greater independence from central Government. That was the Wheatley argument and it is depressing 20 years later to see the degree of central Government supervision growing daily, to the extent that one meets local councillors throughout Scotland who are beginning to say, "There is so little scope for us to make our own decisions, what is the point of continuing?"

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling) *rose——*

Sir Russell Johnston: There is little time left before the debate must end, so I shall continue with my remarks.

The hon. Member for Maryhill was right in spending time to draw attention to the deterioration in central Government and local government relationships.

I shall advance three short arguments, because I am aware that time is limited. First, I think that the Government are indicted by their failure to maintain local government support, especially over the past quinquennium. The hon. Member for Maryhill referred to the sum of £1 billion. In fact, we are talking of a reduction of in support of relevant expenditure from 68·5 per cent. in 1980-81 to 56·6 per cent. at the beginning of the year. Each of the district councils in my constituency, according to the COSLA tables which were referred to by the hon. Member for Maryhill, has suffered a reduction in support of one third when compared with the 1980-81 level.

Secondly, I should like to know how the guidelines are set. This is an issue on which the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) touched and it remains to me one of life's great mysteries. The guidelines are supposed to be an aggregation of individual service assessments, but the assessments are not guidelines. It is the total of the assessments that is a guideline. I find that exceedingly difficult to follow, as does the Highland region. I recall the argument that it had with the Minister over the police. I presume that it is assumed that the Highland region, for example, is spending far too much on education.

Thirdly, many questions arising from Government cuts should be raised. Because of the shortage of time I shall raise only two. The teaching issue can be bypassed, because the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) made the points cogently. First, will the Minister say something about the relief on revaluation? What will happen to the underspend? Will the money just go back to the Treasury? What will happen next year? What will be the effect next year on the rates of small businesses? Secondly, the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams) mentioned housing, which is a source of ever-present worry for district councils. There has been much brouhaha about the sale of council houses, but only about 9 per cent. of council houses have been sold. Apparently this sale was a major issue, but what is being done for those who cannot buy their own houses and then cannot find rented accommodation either? The districts cannot build because of reductions in grant. That is scandalous.

The alliance will vote against the order. I agree with the statements made by every Opposition Member. I disagree especially with the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who practically made sycophancy into an art. The order is another step along the road to undermine local government.

11.31.pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I shall vote against this order, just as I have voted against every rate support grant order since I entered Parliament in 1970, irrespective of the side of the House on which I sat.

I speak from a strong position. I speak on behalf not only of the Labour party in Cunninghame, South but of the officials of the Cunninghame, South Conservative and Unionist Association who have told the Prime Minister that they will resign if the Government do not change the British Steel Corporation's decision to close Gartcosh and will not put up a candidate against me at the next election. I am happy about that. In the last two general elections I won more than half the votes in my constituency, and the 20 per cent. of votes that the Tories win in my constituency will make little difference to the result.

The officials of Cunninghame, South Conservative and Unionist Association have not taken this action solely because of the decision to close Gartcosh. That was the final straw, but there had previously been the fiasco of the rating revaluation which caused many problems for the Conservative Government and Scottish Ministers. Since the Conservative party took power in 1979 there has been one crisis and fiasco after another, until the Conservatives are no longer a political party in Scotland. They are nearly running neck and neck with the Scottish National party, and that is going down some way.

From listening to the Tory party conference it became increasingly clear that the Government were no longer considering reforming the rating system in the United Kingdom and that they were considering the publication of another consultative document. I do not know how many consultative documents I have seen on the reform of the rating system since I entered Parliament, but there will now be another one. It is becoming increasingly clear as the discussions continue between the three wise men, including the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram)—that the Government have no intention of reforming the rating system because they see no satisfactory alternative to it.

I am disturbed not by the fact that the Government are to renege on their promises to the ratepayers but by what is happening in Scotland. The Secretary of State for Scotland, supported by the Under-Secretary, is saying, "We are going to go it alone. If the Government are not prepared to change the rules and reform the rating system, we shall reform the rating system in Scotland." We shall have a fiasco similar to the one that occurred when, under both parties, the Scottish Office decided to continue with revaluation when their colleagues in England and Wales stopped it.

I do not know when Scotland will learn that, if we change the rules in Scotland but do not change them in England, Scotland suffers. Scotland is suffering now because we continued with revaluation in 1973 when England stopped it.

Mr. Younger: Is not the hon. Gentleman a bit rusty? Does he not remember that he and I fought against the

[Mr. Younger]

1978 revaluation when the increases in our area were considerably higher than they were this year? He received no support, money or help for ratepayers from the Labour Government, whereas the present Government have been generous in helping them.

Mr. Lambie: I do not want to take up that point, except to say that when he and I took deputations to my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) he was in opposition. When I asked him this year, on the last revaluation, when he was in government, to come with me and make representations to the Government, he refused. When he is in opposition he is willing to take part in deputations to the Government, but when he is in government he is unwilling to take the actions he advocated when he was in opposition.

If the Scottish people are to be kidded again, and if the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Under-Secretary are to change the rating system in Scotland for a mixture of the present property tax and a poll or residence tax, the Scottish people will again find that they are subsidising the Exchequer in England. English ratepayers will be laughing at us. Scotland has suffered from continuous revaluations while there have been no revaluations in England and Wales. If we make changes in Scotland without making corresponding changes in England and Wales, Scottish ratepayers will suffer again. That is why I hope that the Secretary of State will withdraw the order and think twice about taking unilateral action to change the rating system in Scotland. We should have a system which covers the whole of the United Kingdom.

11.38 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Secretary of State knows that Glasgow has done a great deal to help industry because it has a responsibility to do so. The fact that he is withholding money from Glasgow will cause it great difficulties.

In my constituency, BREL Springburn announced redundancies, and Glasgow district council said that it was prepared to undertake a feasibility study. I hope that the Minister will take on board the fact that BREL in Derby has refused to allow Glasgow district council's consultants on to its premises. BREL Derby has in effect refused to co-operate with a feasibility study designed to see what the future holds for the work force. This is shameful and absolutely scandalous because the Under-Secretary knows that if redundancies take place in what is the only railway workshop left in Scotland the local authority will have to pick up the pieces—and Derby says that it will not help.

I hope that the Government take this matter on board and make representations on behalf of the people in my constituency, to do something to help a local authority which is acting in a very responsible manner.

11.40 pm

Mr. Ancram: It may be helpful if I answer some of the points that have been raised in this debate. Listening to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), it became clear to me that his views are so akin to those of the Conservative party that the Conservatives in his area see that within him.

The basic point arising from the debate is the suggestion, originally made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) in quoting figures, that, if the rate support grant proportion had been maintained, this would in some way have helped the ratepayers of Scotland and of particular areas of Scotland. As I asked the hon. Member to take into account, that assumes that if rate support grant is held proportionately at the same level, expenditure remains the same. I have to repeat that experience shows that when rate support grant has been so held, expenditure has risen.

The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) made the same point. While it is true arithmetically to say that a higher rate of grant—he mentioned certain figures—would mean more grant to local authorities, it would also historically mean higher local authority expenditure. The effect would be not only to increase the burden on the taxpayer, who is producing that rate support grant, but also to increase the burden on the ratepayer. The policy that the hon. Member advocated that the Government should follow would be precisely the opposite of that which the Government have sought to follow, of protecting ratepayers and taxpayers alike.

The other central question raised during the debate was also raised by the hon. Member for Maryhill. He looked at the provision which, he was quite rightly informed, is the figure from which the guidelines stem. He made the point that the provision this year had been increased by only 3·9 per cent. as against an inflation rate which is likely to be higher. It was a valid point to raise, but, if he thinks about it—since the Government's policy is to reduce local authority expenditure, and since we have set out the reasons why we believe that that expenditure is still too high—he will see that it would have been totally illogical to allow expenditure in real terms to continue at the present rate. It is, therefore, quite deliberate that the provision after the enhancement we made this year of £59 million will, in fact, require a real-terms reduction by local authorities across Scotland. Had that not been the case we would merely have been underlining the level of overspending that exists within local authorities at the moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) asked what authorities are doing with the provision for teachers' salary increases. The question was also put by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). Obviously, local authorities will have made provision for their estimate of teachers' salary increases this year, and equally clearly they will not have had to make us of it so far. It must be for them to decide what they will do with it at the present time. I would think, however, that at this stage of the financial year no prudent authority would have committed it elsewhere, in view of the uncertainty of whether it would or would not be required before the end of the financial year.

I must say to my hon. Friend that, as far as I am aware, Fife's reduction is the result of a sensible reappraisal of all its services. It shows in a major way the benefits that can be achieved for ratepayers by authorities which have been subjected to penalties. Given that Fife budgeted way over guideline to the disadvantage of its ratepayers, as my hon. Friend pointed out, and given that it is now seeking to reduce its budget and may, by next year have made a substantial reduction in its budget at outturn, it will be possible for the authority to make a return if it wishes—I am sure that my hon. Friend will press it so to do—of some 3·6p in the pound to the ratepayers of Fife. That shows other authorities in a similar position that there

remain substantial benefits to be gained on behalf of their ratepayers, even at this stage of the financial year, if they can bring their budgets either down to guideline or as near to guideline as possible.

Following representations made to us by COSLA, which said that the return of penalty arrived too late in the financial year for proper use to be made of it, this year we introduced the new system whereby, on the provisional returns in June, which is just one quarter into the financial year, the benefits of reduced expenditure in the previous year would be made available in rate support grant returned to those authorities. Therefore, I hope that authorities that have been subject to the penalties that we are debating tonight will seriously consider that they should seek to reduce their expenditure and return the benefits to the ratepayers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) rightly said that not only is the distribution of rate support grant increasingly being carried out on a fairer basis, as the client group approach is implemented, but equally the guidelines are being refined year to year, and those refinements are becoming increasingly clear.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) asked perhaps the most complicated question. He asked how the guidelines are set. It was said earlier that the guidelines seem to vary from year to year. Some of the major variations — indeed, those that benefited district councils in many areas of Scotland— were as a result of direct representations to the Scottish Office about the needs assessments in previous years, particularly in relation to leisure and recreation, where it was felt that the needs assessment did not accurately reflect the needs of authorities on the ground. If we look at the guidelines and needs assessments this year, we see that the district authorities have benefited from the refinement that has been made, which I believe to have been warmly welcomed.

The hon. Gentleman asked how the guidelines were arrived at. It is only right that I try to explain in reasonably simple terms. As in each of the past four years, the first step in arriving at guidelines is the calculation by means of the client group method of the relative expenditure needs assessments. That is the basis. However, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, if all authorities were brought to their needs assessments in terms of their guidelines, we would not only be requiring major and dramatic reductions by some that are way above their needs assessments at the moment, but equally, we would be allowing for expenditure increases for others that are below their needs assessments, which they would not be able to pay for in terms of rates. Therefore we have built various limits into the formula, which allow us to ensure that no authority is asked to make a reduction which is unachievable and that no authority receives such an enhancement of its guidelines that it would be impracticable.

Therefore, the order sets out to try to achieve the co-operation with local authorities that the right hon. Member for Govan was talking about. The best way of getting away from confrontation and achieving co-operation between local authorities and the Scottish Office is if authorities across Scotland this year do what 30 authorities, including seven of the regions and islands, managed to do last year —to budget within the guideline. If they do so, their ratepayers are served and the taxpayer is served, and they can make sure that the services that they wish to provide for their local electorates are provided.

The final point that arose during the debate——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 170.

Division No. 296] **[11.49 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S.
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*

Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*

Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 3) Order 1985, dated 2nd July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Unemployment (Northern Region)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

12.1 am

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): I wish to draw the attention of the House to the problems of unemployment in the norther region. The economic problems of the region have been the subject of a mass of reports over the years. There have been many grand designs, all ending with some form of declaration about the prospects.

The region has not lacked attention. As the subject of analysis it has been a very tolerant patient. Its past contribution to the wealth of the nation is acknowledged and its present fitness to survive and make the best of its opportunities is undoubted among those who live and work there. The future depends on that confidence being accepted and acted upon through national policies and a new economic strategy to match the competence of the regional leadership and effort.

One of the more interesting reports on the region was commissioned by BBC North East. It was the result of a considerable amount of research in particular areas, including my own, where a third of the male population are out of work. This was followed by a study of Consett and what has happened there since the closure of the steelworks. Those reports conclude that the efforts to regenerate communities devastated by economic disaster were seriously deficient and inadequate.

Two months ago BBC North East published a further report, a study of Cleveland, which said:

"This time we have examined the economic change in Teeside showing how this area has experienced a spectacular and remarkable economic collapse."

Here we have a description of a transformation from the greatest hopes of expansion to one of the highest levels of unemployment. Not long ago Cleveland was considered to be an economic success story and one of the nation's most important industrial centres, yet now in this report it is described as grim. The region, and this part of it, ought not to have a future that looks grim. If there is heartache instead of hope, despair instead of confidence and misery instead of happiness it is because the reality of unemployment in my region is an experience that has lasted too long for too many thousands of people. The past they know, they expect something better for the future. They live in the land of the three rivers—the Tyne, the Wear and the Tees. It is ideal for industrial development. Their ports have trading links with Europe and the world. The road systems supporting them provide a network of accesses to the first-class locations available for industrial development. The rail and air services complete our communication advantages. The concentration on the cultivation of the environment recently continues to be an impressive bonus for a region renowned for its variety of physical attractions.

History has recorded the nature and character of the people. There are no doubts about the industry, tenacity and tolerance. There is an abundance of evidence of their adaptability and responsiveness to change. They have produced some remarkable leaders in politics, the trade union movement and commerce and industry, establishing a framework of social, economic and local government institutions in which new industrialists can find fulfilment in their business, cultural recreational and educational aspirations.

[Mr. Ted Leadbitter]

Why, then, have we a grim account of the region? Where does responsibility lie? I am not aware of one organisation, individual or local authority in the region active in industrial promotion and the provision of employment which lacks the spirit of co-operation or the professional standards needed for success. Why, then, the assertions of economic collapse? Some recent news, which continue the drama of decline, absolve the region of any responsibility. On 16 October, the *Northern Echo*, published in Darlington, ran a headline:

"North job shock—1,000 axed in a day."

That was the full meaning of a the closure of coke works, an electronics factory, a heating equipment works and redundancies in a telephone company in different areas and towns in the region. Three days earlier, the *Mail*, in Hartlepool, had a front page headline.

"Region is dying on its feet".

It referred to a report from the transport workers' leader, Mr. Joe Mills — a man known for his care and moderation—to his regional committee. The newspaper described it as a crisis report. These are the latest signs of the blight in the lives of a fine people who have watched the years of closures in their steel, coal and shipbuilding industries, observed the withering of the construction industry and the redundancies in the chemical and allied trades, metal manufactures and mechanical engineering.

None of this arises from any action of the region. The nature of the closures, the industries involved and the contraction in the major industries that I have mentioned suggest that the cause rests elsewhere. We are fully aware that the employment structure had to become more diversified and that the traditional base of heavy industries would be shifted. The capital investment was directed to more capital — intensive industrial replacement and productivity which did not provide the employment levels needed to match displacement. That fact, and the causes related to it, give the Government a greater responsibility to understand the changing world and its impact on regions such as the north. What is happening in world and home markets? New technologies are displacing traditional methods, new forms of production are being introduced, and a complex of new tariff and credit conditions in international trade and other factors external to the region have an impact.

It is convenient that the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade has just issued a remarkable set of conclusions after years of study. The first volume of the document published on 30 July 1985 states

"Government should give more and not less support to those bodies which are engaged in promoting exports, such as the Export Credits Guarantee Department, the British Overseas Trade Board, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration."

I have studied the matter with care over the years, and it is high time we increased the amount of aid in the aid and trade provision programme. Moreover, there is a need for concern in the regions, where many jobs could have been made available, if the Government had been vigorous and active regarding tne Bosporus bridge contract.

Clearly, national policies are needed to bring about effective conditions for regional survival and growth. I hope that the Minister will not give us a tutorial about what we can do for ourselves. We have had enough lecturing from Whitehall. I assure the Minister that the region is not short of industrial and professional standards, or the armoury of commercial and local government agencies well suited to promote and exercise all that is needed to attract new industries.

Nor do we want from the Minister a repeat of comparative performances of different Governments. The unemployed in my region are hungry for hope, not a history lesson on past failures. After six years of Tory rule they are entitled for once to hear the Government accepting their full responsibility, recognising that time has placed the ball fully in their court, and that it is their intentions in that matter.

The Cleveland experience may well concentrate the mind. A Cleveland review from 1974-84 addressed itself to the broader national trends and the analysis of industrial shift, to which I have already referred. The report stated that the unemployment rate doubled between 1979 and 1981, and that by 1984 the county job gap was about 67,000. Service employment as a proportion of total employment rose to 60 per cent. from 44 per cent. 10 years earlier.

That briefly describes the massive loss of manufacturing jobs. The scheduled transfer of central Government offices to the area never took place. Three thousand jobs were involved, but the transfer was rescinded in 1979. By 1982 the position had become so bad that the area was designated a special development area. That is not only the story of Cleveland, but of the region, where 244,000 people are now unemployed. Aid that might have come was withdrawn and policies never matched the nature of the problem.

The Government are ever ready to take credit for their rare successes. Let them now accept the responsibility for their failure. We have heard from one former Tory Prime Minister who supports the line of Government responsibility. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), with his experience as a former Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Regional Development, made a significant speech to the Sunderland Conservative association on 14 January this year in which he said:

"My message is, do not despair. The situation is not hopeless. The North has faced these problems in the past and has come through them . . . the White Paper on the North East . . . is now more than 20 years ago, but there are lessons to be learned. The first is that a strategy can be developed to deal with the problems of economic decline, the second is that the strategy can be successfully implemented . . . It should be possible to create a thriving industry in the North East . . . And it is here that the Government has a role to play. It can help indentify key sectors of industry and co-ordinate their development."

No prevarication there. The message is clear; no doubt remains about what ought to be done and what can be done. How different from the reply of the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand), who asked about the effects of the Budget on unemployment in the northern region. She said:

"Although unemployment is very high in the north, indeed it is the highest of all, the wages in the region are also comparatively high . . . The two might be related."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 986.]

That was the Prime Minister's reaction. The fact she acknowledges; the responsibility she does not. Months later, during a fleeting visit to the region, she told the people there, "Don't be moaning Minnies." That was petulant, imprudent and unjustified. Then she ordered, "Stop it." Such posturings gain her no great credit and it is regrettable and sad that in the time that has elapsed she has taken no opportunity to make some redress and

perhaps admit that the region has a long-standing reputation for objectivity in presenting its views. How different it would have been if she and her Government had matched that objectivity. Instead, we have a Government obsessed with promoting failure as success, a Government suffering from tunnel vision, obscuring reality and the consequences of their own policies, and a Government who act out of prejudice against the GLC and spawn a Local Government Bill abolishing all metropolitan county councils, under the pretence of needed reform. Tyne and Wear county council is an important authority and damage to it is damage to the region.

We have a Government spending many months of parliamentary time on ratecapping legislation and imposing penalties on local authorities and, yes, we have a Government who are oblivious to the social and economic costs of their own surgical operations although in my region there has already been too much blood letting. We have a Government who have become abrasive and intolerant.

It is no wonder that another former Tory Prime Minister said in another place that it was breaking his heart to see what was happening to Britain. It is breaking my heart to see what is happening to my region; it is breaking my heart to see the despair of young people, the anxiety of parents and the misery of poverty.

We are not so poor in this land that we cannot afford better regional regeneration. We are not so rich that we can neglect the young and the future that their training, their work and their health can provide. We need the will to do what is right and the guts to find the resources for the support of peace and work and leisure—resources that are so easily found for war and related purposes.

In drawing attention to unemployment in the northern region, I am pointing to the need to invest in Britain. The Government have had six years. They have had their chance. They refuse to change with the times or from their own course. They have no new strategy and they refuse to consider one.

No doubt the Minister will seek to deploy some selective material to provide a better face for the Government. It will be of no avail. The balance sheet of failure is there for all to see. We need a new board of directors for the business of Great Britain, and the electors in my region are waiting to make that possible.

12.20 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): In an eloquent and finely constructed speech the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) raised a number of issues about unemployment in the northern region and in his constituency. I shall try to answer fully.

The Government, who now have two Ministers in the Cabinet dealing with employment matters, are only too well aware of the seriousness of unemployment, particularly in the north where there have been long-standing and deep-seated problems. I shall try to answer all the hon. Gentleman's questions, although he did not observe the convention under which we share the time available equally on such occasions.

I shall first dispel the legend which the hon. Gentleman described. The Prime Minister did not call the people in the north of England "moaning Minnies." The context in which those words were used has been distorted and gone into mythology. It is inaccurate.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The words were used.

Mr. Clark: The Prime Minister was describing some of the success stories in the region. Alas, they are few, but she was trying to give hope to those who live in the region. The journalists round her would not accept that and pressed her with unpalatable and familiar statistics. She reproached them for not allowing her, even for a few minutes, to disclose some of the good news to encourage people and to emphasise that the north is not a total and abject failure. The Prime Minister was behaving correctly, but the incident was portrayed as if she categorised the people living in the area as "moaning Minnies." That is inaccurate, as those who saw the incident on television will confirm.

I admit that over the past 20 years more than 200,000 jobs in traditional industries in the north-east have been shed, largely as a result of the world recession, technological change and market shifts. The people of the area have, therefore, had the difficult task of moving away from the old heavy industries towards the growth sectors of the economy. That brings continuing problems and much still needs to be done, but it is encouraging that the rate of redundancies in the region is about half what it was in 1981.

There are many encouraging signs. We should emphasise them without minimising the problem. For example, self-employment in the region has grown significantly. The number of self-employed people is now 87,000, which is over 50 per cent. more than when we took office.

Growth sectors are increasingly important. About 16,000 people are engaged in electronics in firms such as Isocom, the components manufacturer whose new factory in the Hartlepool enterprize zone will be employing up to 500 workers by 1988, and Middlesbrough's CADCAM computer centre which could bring 5,000 jobs to the area by 1995.

The pharmaceutical industry has grown from virtually nothing to an industry employing 5,000. The north-east has a firm foothold in the future with such industries as biotechnology and advanced manufacturing technology. Much of the good news is not publicised as widely as it should be.

Another example is the Nissan factory at Washington which should create 4,500 jobs if all goes well, with a further seven overseas companies attracted to the region this year—*[Interruption.]* Unfortunately, I cannot hear everything that is said from a seated position. I was not left as much time to reply as I should have liked. I have detailed some of the good news and some of the new growth sectors. If another hon. Member succeeds in obtaining another Adjournment debate, we may deal with other matters.

On the retail side, the Metrocentre, due to open in Gateshead in 1986, will be the largest out-of-town shopping complex in the United Kingdom creating up to 5,000 new jobs.

My Department has recently taken responsibility for tourism, and here, too, there are good opportunities for new employment — not only in the traditional tourist areas but in regions such as the north-east.

[Mr. Clark]

Over the past three years, the Northumbria tourist board has been able to assist directly more than 84 tourism projects with Government assistance of £1·3 million. There has also been substantial Government support for major tourism and leisure developments in the region, such as the Beamish open air museum.

The English tourist board has set up tourism development action programmes at Tyne and Wear and Kielder to develop the potential of the areas which will create new sources of employment for the local population. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that there is significant scope for new employment in tourism in the region.

The region is far from being without hope and there are no insuperable disadvantages. With the right help much has been achieved and much more will be achieved. The right help includes a major infusion of Government assistance of various kinds, all of which has a direct effect on employment.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that almost the whole of the region has assisted area status. It has benefited by well over £500 million since 1979 through regional development grants and selective assistance. The Department of the Environment has funded economic, social and environmental projects of nearly £300 million, especially in inner urban areas in the region. Only last week my hon. Friend the environment Minister announced an additional £15 million to tackle inner-city deprivation, £2·5 million of which will go to the north-east.

Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Newcastle-Gateshead have enterprise zones. Newcastle-Gateshead also has a city action team to co-ordinate local and central Government action, especially on job creation, environmental recovery and housing improvement. In Cleveland, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned on a number of occasions, the Department of the Environment has launched the Cleveland initiative for a co-ordinated programme of action on major areas of derelict and underused land.

I must mention the Manpower Services Commission schemes. Government aid to support and encourage economic recovery and the creation of jobs in the region amounts to well over £1 billion since 1979. In that period, the Manpower Services Commission spent more than £300 million—and the planned expenditure this year is £151 million—in helping to create work or provide vocational training. As a result of the expansion of the community programme to help the long-term unemployed, 27,200 places are to be provided by May 1986 in the region—more than double last year's target.

In vocational training, lack of qualifications among the young is a particularly worrying problem. We recognise the value of a well-trained young work force, which is why the youth training scheme is to be extended nationally to two years, leading to vocational qualifications for school leavers from 1 April 1986. That is a major step towards ensuring that all young people under 18 are in work, in full-time education or undergoing high quality training, so that unemployment need not be an option for them from now on.

Organisations in the northern region have generally responded positively to YTS and the Manpower Services Commission plans to provide more than 25,000 places for young people on the scheme in the northern region this year.

Under the adult training strategy, we are focusing on known labour market needs. We plan to help to train nearly 13,000 people in the northern region this year under the adult training programme—an increase of 82 per cent. over the last year—and to help more than 18,000 people next year. At least three quarters of those helped this year will have been unemployed.

We recently announced our endorsement of the expansion of jobclubs to 200 by the end of the year. We were particularly encouraged to do that by the success of two of the first jobclubs, which were established in Durham and Middlesbrough. They have been doing an excellent job in helping the long-term unemployed to help themselves by providing advice and facilities for job hunting. So far, three quarters of unemployed people leaving jobclubs have found jobs, the majority of them quickly.

My Department has recently taken over responsibility for policy on small firms, which have an excellent potential as job creators through their ability to respond quickly to market demands, their flexibility in filling gaps in the market and their capacity for innovation. We aim to stimulate the development of small businesses and to create an economic climate which will be conducive to their sustained growth. There are nearly 80 proposals in my noble Friend's recently published White Paper, "Lifting the Burden", further to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation in this sphere.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that the Government fully recognise the problems faced by many areas in the north. A great deal of well-focused assistance has been directed to those places that have been worst hit by the world recession. We should recognise also that there are encouraging signs; people in the north-east are responding well to the problems and challenges that they face——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Tuesday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 23 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS AFTER PRAYERS

POOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[LORDS]*:

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Poole Borough Council Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

Ordered,

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Steel Industry

1. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the British Steel Corporation's corporate plan; and if he will make a statement.

15. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the position of the steel industry.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Leon Brittan): A statement on the British Steel Corporation's corporate plan was made by my right hon. Friend on 7 August, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. I welcome the fact that Ravenscraig will continue to operate during the current operating period of the British Steel Corporation. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the widespread concern about BSC's proposal to close Gartcosh, which is in Strathkelvin, and the fears of the impact of that closure upon the steel mill at Ravenscraig? Will he assure me that if evidence is brought before the current Select Committee investigation which suggests that the closure of Gartcosh will prejudice the future of Ravenscraig, he and his ministerial colleagues will ask BSC to review its closure decision?

Mr. Brittan: I am aware of the anxieties and have seen two delegations about the matter. I do not believe that the Gartcosh proposal will in any way prejudice the future of Ravenscraig. I shall consider any evidence to the contrary, but the material that has been put before me by the delegations does not support that view.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has revealed to me in a written answer that whereas British jobs in steel have been cut by more than half since 1980, other members of the European Community have not reduced theirs by more than one quarter. Therefore, will my right hon. and learned Friend pay serious attention to the views of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which last year, said that there should be no further steel closures in Britain until other members of the Common Market carried a fair share of the cuts in jobs and capacity?

Mr. Brittan: We shall fight for the British steel industry in the Community, as elsewhere. The United Kingdom's share of closures, which removed 30 million tonnes of hot-rolled capacity throughout the Community, was about 5 million tonnes. As for the future, I believe that the decision relating to Alpha steel makes a significant contribution towards what is required in the Community.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to congratulate the workers of Gartcosh on their splendid record in co-operating with every one of British Steel's plans for productivity, pricing, delivery dates and exports? Will he also, using his new broom,

withdraw the threat to this plant and to this community, which has given so much to the steel industry and to the British manufacturing base?

Mr. Brittan: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am happy to pay tribute to the work force at Gartcosh. Nevertheless, I cannot forestall or change BSC's decision. I am satisfied that Ravenscraig's future is not imperilled by that decision.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Secretary of State realise that his reply, combined with the attitude and policies of the BSC, constitutes an insult to the intelligence of the Scottish people? They believe that if Gartcosh is closed there will be a proposal in three years' time, after the next election, to close Ravenscraig and that our national industry is being sabotaged.

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman has no basis for making such an allegation. In many countries there are integrated hot-strip mills which have no cold mills associated with them. If the hon. Gentleman looks at Nippon Steel's Oita works, Nishin Steel's Kure works and, above all, US Steel's Geneva works in America, which is 400 miles away from the nearest cold reduction mill in Pittsburg, he will realise that his assumption is wholly unfounded.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in 1981 the British Steel Corporation was a joke among the steel producers in Europe, but today it is one of the most productive steel producers, if not the most productive, in Europe? Its costs of producing steel are lower than in Japan as well as West Germany. Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind the House that where the world is awash with steel and the European steel industry is operating at only 65 per cent. of manned capacity, decisions such as those in relation to Gartcosh must be taken if the BSC is to remain viable and to be set on course for a £300 million profit?

Mr. Brittan: I agree that the decisions announced in August are designed further to strengthen the progress of BSC, which has been considerable, as my hon. Friend said. In doing so, the corporation will protect and enhance the prospects for all working in steel.

Mr. Roy Hughes: In his early days in his new and important office, will the Secretary of State recognise that the British steel industry has been cut to the bone in terms of capacity? Will he urge his colleagues to make the strongest possible representations in the European Coal and Steel Community to increase the British quota? Will he also bear in mind that this country will not always be in a state of slump?

Mr. Brittan: I can agree with a large part of what the hon. Gentleman said. We shall be asking for more quota. We have done so, and shall continue to do so.

Mr. McQuarrie: I accept that the decision to close Gartcosh was taken by the BSC, and that it is right that a nationalised corporation should take its own decisions, but what does my right hon. and learned Friend propose to do about the 88 submissons made to him by the trade unions in favour of retaining Gartcosh? As far as Scottish Members are concerned, it is not yet a cut-and-dried decision.

Mr. Brittan: I have met the trade unions concerned, which have elaborated their position to me. I have explained that the strategic decisions relating to the steel industry are taken by the Government, but the decision on Gartcosh is for the corporation.

Mr. MacKenzie: Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that he need not accept every word that is uttered to him by BSC on this matter? The right hon. and learned Gentleman should recall that Ravenscraig was set up by a political decision of Harold Macmillan. Secondly, Gartcosh is seen by every Scottish Member, with the possible exception of one rather eccentric Member, as an essential feature of Scottish industrial life. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman pay attention to the views of Scottish Members of Parliament, who know something about the matter?

Mr. Brittan: Of course I want to consider carefully the views of Scottish Members of Parliament. It is precisely because I want to do so that I have seen two delegations on the matter. However, the fact is that Gartcosh takes 30 per cent. of Ravenscraig's hot mill output. Shotton already takes 25 per cent. and only 6 per cent. of Gartcosh's output goes direct to customers in Scotland. I sympathise with those working at Gartcosh, but I am determined not to undermine the future of Ravenscraig by giving currency or support to the view that the decision on Gartcosh has the implications for Ravenscraig that so many people have suggested.

Mr. Williams: I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman to the somewhat diminished Department of Trade and Industry. I thought that his right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was somewhat cruel on Monday when trying to justify the transfer of the Department of Employment and a considerable part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Department to a Minister in another place, who does not seem to bother to turn up. In trying to justify the transfer of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's duties, the Leader of the House said that it was important to have the right man in the job. May I say that it seems grotesque to the Opposition that, while the Germans are increasing subsidies to the steel industry, this Government are imposing further cuts? As a Welshman, I join my Scots colleagues in denouncing the Gartcosh closure. No one is taken in by the cynical decision to defer the Ravenscraig announcement until after the general election. We are all infuriated by the fact that the Gartcosh decision, plus the refusal to make appropriate investment in Ravenscraig, is a malevolent attempt by the Government to predetermine that Ravenscraig must close when the decision time comes.

Mr. Brittan: I hope that if I ever have occasion to compliment and welcome the right hon. Gentleman, I shall do so in a less laboured way. The objectives of the United Kingdom Government in the European Community are for a highly restrictive regime for state aids to be applied by all countries. That is something that we shall pursue. The point that was made about investment in Ravenscraig is wrong. Since the announcement of which the right hon. Gentleman complained, the British Steel Corporation has announced investment of £15 million in Ravenscraig. That is an earnest of its intentions and sincerity about what was said in August about the future of Ravenscraig.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have allowed a long run on this important matter. We must now get on rather more rapidly.

Merseyside

2. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to bring new industry to Merseyside.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): The Merseyside travel-to-work areas continue to benefit from the highest level of regional aid available in Great Britain.

Mr. Loyden: When will the Minister recognise that the policies pursued by this Government have resulted in abysmal failure with regard to industry coming to Merseyside? Is he aware that about 70,000 jobs have been lost in Liverpool alone in the past seven or eight years and that unemployment among young people is as high as 80 and 90 per cent. in many areas? Is that not the reality, rather than the fantasy of the Government, who suggest that there is a better tomorrow? When will the Government act on the terrible problem of mass unemployment on Merseyside and in other places?

Mr. Morrison: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman listened to my reply. The highest levels of aid in Great Britain are available to Merseyside. Has it not occurred to the hon. Gentleman that Councillor Hatton drives away investment in Liverpool faster than any other thing?

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way for Merseyside to encourage industry into that area is for the Liverpool city fathers to admit that the great Socialist experiment has failed, and that a belief in free enterprise, flexible working practices and lower overheads, especially rates, is needed? Until then, will the Government stop throwing good money after bad?

Mr. Morrison: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the decisions which have been made by the Socialist council in Liverpool drive away investment and jobs from Merseyside.

Mr. Heffer: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that over the past seven years Liverpool has lost 65,000 jobs, and that Mr. Hatton has been deputy leader for the past two years only? Is he also aware that Liverpool, according to EEC charts, is fifth from the top in the league of areas with regional problems? Is he further aware that one in four of the workers on Merseyside is unemployed and that Liverpool is only part of Merseyside? Will he stop talking a lot of nonsense, like his colleagues, about Mr. Hatton and begin to deal with the real problem of Merseyside —unemployment—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Long questions take time from the other side.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my constituency is just 15 miles away from Merseyside and Liverpool. I am well aware of the problem with which that part of the country has to deal. However, it would help if the likes of Councillor Hatton and his colleagues did not drive away potential investors.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the most sensible recent suggestions about the problems of industry was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who is determined to ensure that the overfat south-east industry goes to help the lean and hungry midlands, north and Merseyside? Does he agree that it is a sensible use of Government patronage to ensure that those who are hungry in the north need not always feed those in the south?

Mr. Morrison: As my hon. Friend will accept, I always agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who will have regard to value for money and other aspects when he places contracts.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the fact that the contrived confrontation in Liverpool is undoubtedly driving away industry and investment from Merseyside and that the sooner the confrontation and aggression end the better it will be for Merseyside, does the Minister accept that one in five of the population there is out of work, and that the city planning officer predicts that a further 31,000 will become unemployed by 1991? What will he seriously try to do to attract new and better enterprise to that deprived part of the country?

Mr. Morrison: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman accepts that there is a problem of turning away inward investment. I accept that Merseyside and Liverpool have great problems. As I said in answer to the main question, Liverpool receives the highest regional aid in the country through the various schemes. I do not believe that the Government can do more than that.

European Regional Development Fund

3. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value of the grants allocated to England from the European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Peter Morrison: About £860 million.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that those grants bring considerable advantage to Britain? Is he satisfied that the general public are aware of the extent of such assistance from the EC?

Mr. Morrison: I certainly accept tht the grants bring investment into Britain. Between 1979 and 1983, about 109,000 jobs have been associated with the regional development fund. I am always keen to broadcast the schemes available, and my right hon. and learned Friend and I will do precisely that throughout the country.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: I welcome the Minister of State to his new responsibility for regional aid, but I point out to him that he inherits a policy that was hacked to pieces by his predecessor. Will he take an early look at the prospects for regional aid in the light of the fact that, whatever we get from the ERDF, we shall still be a massive contributor to the EC budget, and that any help that the Government can give under section 7 of the Industry Act will be far less than was lost to the regions through the reduction in the previous regional policy? Will he review the position and the policy that he has inherited in the light of its results?

Mr. Morrison: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. We certainly wish to maximise what we get from the EDRF. However, I am sure he will agree that the most sensible and correct way to proceed is to direct the money available towards the creation of more jobs.

Steel Industry

4. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the present position in regard to the privatisation of the special steels capacity of the British Steel Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It was announced on 7 August that the Government have agreed in principle to BSC's and GKN's proposals for a joint venture in engineering steels. The Government welcome the proposed venture as a further step towards the privatisation of BSC's activities.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister agree that after all the furtive wheeling and dealing in pursuit of this privatisation, which has continued for several years, it is time that some consideration was given to the interests of the workers in the special steels industry, who have devoted great energy to assist the development of the industry, taken part in an enormous effort dramatically to improve productivity and broken world production records, but whose wages, valuation and conditions of employment are now regarded as a matter of the utmost secrecy? Does the Minister accept that the Government have a responsibility to the nation as a whole, not merely to the accommodation of the fixers in our declining economy?

Mr. Morrison: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman that the work force is an important aspect of any company. However, he will be aware that the Government made their decision, which was announced on 7 August, with the thought in mind that it is in the best interests of the companies and, therefore, of their labour forces, that the proposals should be proceeded with. However, negotiations have yet to take place.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that steel stockholders in my constituency tell me that they have considerable difficulty in getting supplies of appropriate steels from BSC and that, although they would like to buy British, they find that on the whole BSC does not seem to be interested and that, as a result, they have to import many kinds of special steel? Does my hon. Friend agree that privatisation can only improve that position?

Mr. Morrison: I agree that privatisation is likely to improve the situation. That is why we are proceeding with quotas in the way that we are.

Mr. Crowther: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that rumours are rife again in south Yorkshire about further closures in the special steels sector? In the past such rumours have all too often proved to be true. As the BSC chairman, Sir Robert Haslam, made it clear at his last meeting with the Select Committee that he expected a further closure in that sector after Tinsley Park, and as agreement has now been reached on the privatisation scheme, will the hon. Gentleman take steps to make public this agreement, which so far has been secret, so that the people concerned will know where they stand, how many more closures will take place and how many more jobs will be lost?

Mr. Morrison: Those rumours are pure and complete conjecture. Further negotiations are taking place to get the deal together and, until they are concluded, no decisions could possibly be taken. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about uncertainty. That is always very unsettling for those who may or may not be involved.

Competition and Retailing

5. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Government policy following the Director General of Fair Trading's report on competition and retailing.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): A full statement was made by my predecessor on 28 June, stating the Government's policy in the light of the Director General's report.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is widespread concern that the Binder Hamlyn report seriously underestimated the power of the monopoly purchaser in the market place through the operation of the discriminatory discount system? If the hon. Gentleman will not legislate to protect the small retailer, will he at least consider setting up a voluntary code of practice, or is he merely prepared to stand idly by and let our network of small retailers, especially those in rural areas, simply wither away?

Mr. Howard: The question of a code of practice is one for the trade itself to consider, although it would be essential for such a code not to conflict with the requirements of our competition legislation.

Mr. Fletcher: Will my hon. Friend confirm that his Department has not received any complaints from consumers or consumer organisations about the level of competition in retailing? Is it not a fact that consumers throughout the country are enjoying great benefits from the Government's competition policy?

Mr. Howard: I am happy to confirm my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Gould: I welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities. I put it to him that there is a simple question at the base of this apparently complicated matter. The market share of the four major supermarket groups has risen, the number of small independent grocers has fallen and the discriminatory discounts which are the cause of the problem have grown in size. Are the Government prepared to sit back and allow this to continue?

Mr. Howard: The extent to which the market share has increased is diminishing. The hon. Gentleman is asking the Government to take action that would increase the prices that consumers pay. I think that such action would be difficult to justify.

Cars (Imports)

6. **Mr. Neillst** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from BL about the report by Dan Jones on import penetration of cars.

Mr. Brittan: None, but I recognise the concern about the sourcing policies of the multinational car companies, and there have been discussions with those companies. Ford has now said that it plans to manufacture 70 per cent. of its United Kingdom car requirements in its United Kingdom plants in the second half of 1985, and to maintain or increase the 80 per cent. United Kingdom content in these cars. Vauxhall aims to increase the number of cars and car-derived vans that it manufactures in the United Kingdom from 45 per cent. of its

requirements in 1984 to 56 per cent. this year. Vauxhall will also raise the United Kingdom content of its vehicles from an average of about 46 per cent. in 1984 to about 49 per cent. by the end of this year. I regret that, after lengthy discussions, Vauxhall is not yet ready to go further in proving that it really is a British car producer.

Mr. Nellist: Has not the report, with its revelation that exactly two-thirds of car sales in Britain come from imports, prompted the Government to push General Motors, Ford and Peugeot into making public their plans for investment and future manufacture in this country? Does the report not show that the catastrophic fall in employment in the car industry from 500,000 to 250,000 over the past 10 years is because multinational companies such as General Motors and Ford have no loyalty to Britain or to their workers, and that their loyalty is purely to the global strategy of profit and money?

Mr. Brittan: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's analysis will assist the British motor industry. The causes that have led to the fall in British car manufacture are much more complicated than the hon. Gentleman suggests. He has to look at such things as labour practices, productivity and wage claims. The progress made by some British car manufacturers, in particular British Leyland in the past few years, resulting in their getting to grips with the difficulties, has been remarkable and should be commended.

Mr. John Carlisle: Instead of listening to hard luck stories about British Leyland and import penetration, will my right hon. and learned Friend listen to the success stories of General Motors, and in particular Vauxhall Motors? Does he appreciate that output by Vauxhall Motors has doubled in recent years, that the United Kingdom content of Vauxhall cars is going up quite dramatically and that, unlike British Leyland, Vauxhall, certainly at Luton, has received no Government money, whereas BL has received £1·8 billion over the past two years? Will my right hon. and learned Friend talk about the success stories rather than listening to the carping of British Leyland?

Mr. Brittan: I am happy to compliment my hon. Friend's constituents on the sterling work that they have done and I hope that that will lead to General Motors to ensure that more Vauxhall cars are made in Britain.

Mr. Park: In the general endeavour to get some balance into our motor industry, can we expect that the new Secretary of State will initiate strenuous attempts to achieve balance in the trade between Spain, and this country, to enable Austin-Rover to trade on equal terms in that country and not have to climb over a tariff barrier four times as high as that faced by the Spanish manufacturers?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman is making a perfectly fair point about Spain, and this is one of the matters where Spanish entry into the EC will assist, because it will lead to a reduction in the tariff and an increase in the reduced duty quota.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that the manufacturers in my constituency, and in particular Land Rover, would benefit greatly in terms of competition if they could enjoy lower interest rates and more favourable exchange rates, and if there were a review of the special VAT on cars?

Mr. Brittan: These were among the points made by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders at its conference this morning and I am conscious of the interests and desires of the society in that respect.

Mr. Williams: Has the Secretary of State seen this absurd advertisement, which says "GM loves UK", ending with the words

"We seem to be a perfect match"?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that for us this is a case of unrequited love, as GM told the House of Lords Select Committee that imports to the United Kingdom of foreign-made kits, for cars to be merely assembled here by Meccano technology, have increased more than threefold, from 51,000 in 1981 to 163,000 last year and in the meantime GM's net adverse trade balance has reached the appalling figure of £656 million? Far from being a perfect match, is not the reality that GM has leeched on to the British market under the disguise of British labels to sell foreign cars while exporting British jobs to the EC?

Mr. Brittan: I have given the figures and my comments. I do not think that it helps to put the matter in the terms that the right hon. Gentleman does. Having said what I have said about our disappointment that it has not been possible for General Motors to go further, one has a duty to point out that if the British components' share in the product is not so high as one would like one must ask whether British component manufacturers cannot produce products which General Motors must recognise ought to be included in its cars, on price considerations alone.

The City (Regulatory Framework)

7. **Mr. Grylls** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has so far been made in establishing the regulatory framework for the City.

Mr. Brittan: Good progress is being made. The preparation of legislation based on the financial services White Paper is well advanced. In the City, arrangements for setting up the new regulatory structure are in hand under the direction of the Securities and Investments Board and the Marketing of Investments Board Organising Committee.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, on reflection, and following the debates in the House before the recess, it might be better to have one overall body to regulate the City, rather than two bodies as originally proposed, but subject to reconsideration?

Mr. Brittan: I know that a strong body of opinion feels that way. We are awaiting the views of the SIB and MIBOC as to whether there should be one board or two. If a single board is recommended, I shall have absolutely no objection to that.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Home Secretary—or rather the ex-Home Secretary, complete with his new job and new hairpiece—*[Interruption.]* I think that it is very fancy. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take appropriate steps to ensure that there is a proper inquiry into the Lloyd's fiasco? Will he also acknowledge that a major body blow to the City and to the taxpayer has been the loss by the Export Credits Guarantee Department of £400 million in the last financial year, resulting in a £350 million bail-out from the Consolidated Fund? Will he also make inquiries in Nigeria to see where the fraudulent

practices took place that resulted in a substantial loss to the taxpayer and take appropriate steps, with the Attorney-General, to see that those involved are brought to book?

Mr. Brittan: The only part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary that has anything to do with the main question is that related to Lloyd's. Disciplinary proceedings by Lloyd's have been taking place. In addition, the Director of Public Prosecutions is considering a number of matters relating to some of the affairs concerning Lloyd's that have achieved wide publicity. I believe that that process should be allowed to continue.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that if the new proposals for large conglomerates in the City and the merger between jobbers and brokers go ahead there will have to be careful consideration of the whole law of agency to avoid the conflict of interest that may be expected? Will he examine that very carefully in the forthcoming Session?

Mr. Brittan: I shall certainly look very carefully at the point made by my hon. Friend. We shall wish to consider the impact on the law of agency of any changes in the City. In saying that, however, I do not wish to give the impression that we have reached any conclusions whatever on the subject.

Mr. Gould: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that his plans for regulating the City would carry more credibility if he were prepared to take seriously the abuses and irregularities that have come to light in respect of the British Telecom flotation? While some of the cases have rightly been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, does he agree that with further privatisations pending it is essential that a full departmental inquiry should take place into what went wrong with the BT flotation so that we can all know the extent to which killings were made at the expense of the taxpayer and in defiance of the Government's own rules?

Mr. Brittan: I do not believe that such investigation is called for. I believe that the inquiries now being made, to which the hon. Gentleman rightly referred, are the appropriate ones and that that is the right way to proceed in this matter.

Mr. Nelson: To pursue the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the supplementary question of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), would it not be most remarkable if either the SIB or the MIBOC were to recommend its own abolition? I support my hon. Friend and urge my right hon. and learned Friend to give serious consideration to the representations that have been made from both sides of the House during the many debates that have taken place on this issue. We must have legislation that provides for one stratified authoritative body to have control of the regulation of the City.

Mr. Brittan: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall give most serious consideration to the issue that he has raised. He is right to say that he is by no means the only person raising it.

Mr. Maclennan: In view of the revelations of pending prosecution of representatives of the Bank of England and the attention that is being directed to its own regulatory role, when matters have been cleared up will the Secretary of State make a statement to the House on the future of the Bank's regulatory role in respect of the commodity markets?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman must have said inadvertently what he did not intend to say. Certain matters are being investigated, and until the investigations are completed it would be quite wrong to jump to the conclusion to which the hon. Gentleman has jumped.

Company Donations

8. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now encourage companies to ballot their shareholders and employees before making donations for political purposes.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): This is something for company directors to decide in the light of circumstances and their priorities.

Mr. Winnick: Now that union members have demonstrated clearly their wish to continue with the political fund, why is it that the Government refuse to legislate for, or even to encourage companies to have, such balloting before contributions are made for political causes? What does the Minister, especially the Secretary of State, say to all those fair-minded individuals who say, "If unions are forced to have political fund ballots every 10 years, why are companies not subject to the same provision?" Is the answer that companies donate to the Tory party?

Mr. Pattie: Companies are not subject to the same provisions, for a simple reason which I would have thought would be apparent to the hon. Gentleman. Shareholders are free to buy or sell their shares, and very often trade union members do not have the freedom to choose the union to which they will belong.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Why has the Labour party such a fixation about these donations? Have representatives of the Labour party never been able to attend annual general meetings? Have they never had the privilege of reading an annual report in which political donations are declared? If they take such a view about political donations, should they not attend annual general meetings to try to vote down the proposition that such donations be made? Surely each company shareholder is entitled to support or dismiss a political donation as it comes before him.

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He and the House may be interested to know that within the workings of the Labour party there are some proposals afoot which suggest that the Labour party might approach companies to see whether donations might be forthcoming.

Mr. Pike: Should not companies such as Silentnight be forced to hold ballots for their shareholders before they break agreements that have been reached with trade unions and before they dismiss workers who balloted under trade union legislation?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with political donations.

Aid and Trade Contingency Provision

9. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the operation of the aid and trade contingency provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: Since 1978, exports totalling £1·7 billion have been secured with £350 million from the aid and trade provision. With this support, 96 projects have been won in 37 countries. I am confident that ATP will continue to be a very effective instrument.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer, which demonstrates how well he has done. Does he realise how seriously concerned major British exporters are that their Japanese counterparts have an ATP fund that is 40 times as great? They will feel at a distinct competitive disadvantage for as long as this continues, despite the excellence of their products. Does he agree that, first, we must deal toughly with the Japanese on what amounts to a grotesquely unfair trading practice? We must speed up our procedures for the approval of the ATP budget so that industry can take quick decisions. If possible, we should increase the budget. We should certainly set aside a special budget for China, without reducing the existing budget.

Mr. Brittan: I agree with my hon. Friend about the need to take action against unfair practices. My hon. Friend will be aware that we have announced that in principle the aid and trade provision could be used to enable long-term low interest loans, similar to those that are offered by our competitors, to be made available in appropriate cases. It is in that context that officials have been visiting Beijing to consider a possible facility there. The total size of the ATP provision is being considered in the context of current public expenditure discussions, and I cannot anticipate their outcome.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is not the point that the Japanese offer massively better facilities than are offered by the British Government, in that to date the British Government have been halfhearted about that kind of assistance for industry here? Has the time not come when we ought to have a genuinely rolling ATP programme so that the timing of a project is not the factor that means that the project fails to receive the go-ahead?

Mr. Brittan: Certainly, I agree that we need one that is flexible and can accommodate the commercial realities of the situation. It is true that the use of mixed credits has grown. Notifications to OECD rose by 50 per cent. in 1984. I do not think that a general competitive increase in provisions of this kind is necessarily in the best interests of this country, because if it goes on we may be outbid. It is, therefore, in our interests to use our international influence to discourage practices of this kind. For the moment there is no doubt at all that we must adopt a flexible approach. It is for just that reason that we shall be introducing the soft loan facility of the kind called for by industry, which will help us make the best possible provision.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I was very happy to hear my right hon. and learned Friend's last statement. Is he aware that, in the experience of most exporters, including the largest in Lincoln, the flexible use of soft loans is one of the best weapons in securing large overseas contracts, rather than our previous excessive reliance on direct grants?

Mr. Brittan: Both will be needed. Different mechanisms will be appropriate for different projects. We are, however, persuaded of the need for soft loans and it is for exactly that reason that I hope, in the not too distant future, to announce the details of the scheme on which we have been working.

Regional Policy

11. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the results to date of his regional policy.

Mr. Brittan: It is too early to measure the effectiveness of the revised regional policy. The transitional period is not over and we expect to continue making payments under the old schemes for some time. We shall make an assessment as soon as possible after the new incentive package has had time to work through into additional job opportunities.

Mr. Wainwright: Further to that very disappointing reply, is the Secretary of State aware of the vast and ever widening gulf between some regions of this country and others in terms of economic activity and recovery, in relation to which his present budget for regional policy is quite inadequate? Will he, therefore, announce that he is now aiming at greater financial support for his regional policy?

Mr. Brittan: I do not need to be told by the hon. Gentleman about the gulf between different parts of the country. It is a subject on which I touched very extensively in my speech to the Conservative party conference only a couple of weeks ago. However, the hon. Gentleman is making a great error if he thinks that the efficacy of regional policy can be judged simply by the amount of money spent on it. To provide huge sums of money for capital investment which would have taken place in any event, or which would lead to no substantial number of new jobs, is simply a waste of money and has nothing to do with regional policy.

Mr. Silvester: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that regional policy is not simply a matter for his Department, but affects decisions of all Departments of State, as the Secretary of State for Defence has now acknowledged? Is it part of his responsibility within the Government to ensure that regional policy is considered in all aspects of other Department's decisions?

Mr. Brittan: I am not sure whether it is my responsibility, but I certainly indicated in that same speech that I thought it ought to happen.

Mr. Hugh Brown: In the light of that Blackpool speech, when the Secretary of State indicated strong support for regional policies, and in the light of what he has already said, is he hinting that there will be a reduction in public expenditure in inducements for investment?

Mr. Brittan: I was not hinting at anything. I said what I had to say. The evidence of the new policy and what it is doing is apparent in some respects, because since parts of the west midlands became intermediate areas last November, 538 firm applications for regional selective

assistance have been received, 156 offers of grant have been made so far, which represent over £17 million of grant and over £150 million of total investment, and nearly 12,000 jobs are to be created or safeguarded. That is our new regional policy.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, irrespective of the answer that he has just given, the designation of the Ross and Cinderford travel-to-work area as an intermediate area is regarded as a sick joke? Since the designation a year ago, only 18 of the 285 applications made have gone to the first stage of appraisal, and, as far as I am aware, not a single one has come to fruition. Given the intervening increase in unemployment in the area, which has now reached about 17 per cent., will my right hon. and learned Friend reaffirm yet again his determination to make the intermediate area status successful? Will he also let us know how that travel-to-work area compares with others that were designated at the same time?

Mr. Brittan: I assure my hon. Friend that the existence of intermediate areas and the regional selective assistance available to them are important parts of regional policy. If my hon. Friend has any reason to believe that a project put forward from his constituency has not received the consideration that it should be given under the criteria, I hope that he will let us know.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Is the Secretary of State aware that the House is not terribly interested in what he tells the Conservative party at Blackpool, but is much more interested in what he does as the Minister in charge of regional policy? Will he confirm that it is the stated aim of his policy massively to reduce regional aid for the regions, and confirm that that is already being acheived? When the impact of that policy becomes clear in the regions, will the Secretary of State make a statement to the House and, in the light of reductions in regional aid and the ever-increasing unemployment in the regions, will he revise his policy and reinstate the policy which his predecessor hacked to pieces?

Mr. Brittan: I do not undertake to do any of the things for which the hon. Gentleman asks. He sounded like an old gramophone record that needs replacing. As I said in answer to a previous question, I do not believe that the success or value for money of regional policy can be judged simply by the amount of money being poured into it. The evidence given repeatedly over the years of money spent in the name of regional policy not leading to more jobs in the regions is legion. There is evidence to support the better targeting of regional policy, which we are pursuing. I have given an example from the west midlands, and I am happy to give an example from Bishop Auckland, a different part of the country, where, in a comparatively short time and in a small area, nearly £3 million of grants have been offered which have led to the creation or safeguarding of more that 1,200 jobs. The overall effect is, of course, impossible to assess only a matter of months after the policy came into existence, but I shall certainly be happy to report to the House from time to time on the effects.

Mr. Dorrell: I agree that one cannot judge the effectiveness of regional policy solely in terms of the money spent, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that arguments that regional policy is ineffective because it does not create additional net jobs in the economy as a whole also miss the point? Obviously, all new jobs are welcome, but is not the key feature of regional policy the fact that it is intended to transfer jobs into areas where assistance is available? Measured against that test, is not the policy quite successful?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend is right. The figure of about 500,000 jobs in the region has been mentioned and I do not think that we need be embarrassed or ashamed about the fact that we are spending money—effectively now, I hope—to redress the balance to which reference has been made from both sides of the House.

Cars (Overseas Components)

12. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to which motor vehicles, by name, although seemingly British-made, have over 40 per cent. and over 50 per cent., respectively, of foreign-made components.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): Detailed information in the terms requested by the hon. Member on the imported component content of vehicles is, I regret, not available.

Mr. Flannery: It is appalling that the information is not available; it should be available. Will all Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry come to Sheffield to see the vast ex-industrial area of the east end so that they may realise what havoc they have wrought in the past six years? Do they realise that many factories are closing and there is a major strike in a so-called privatised firm in Sheffield because the steel that we make in south Yorkshire, which should be going to the motor trade, cannot go there because of the importation of foreign cars? What will the Government do? It is incredible. Unemployment seems to be out of control and the Government have no plans to do anything about the steel industry.

Mr. Butcher: The reason why it is difficult to obtain those figures is that the car companies would have great difficulty, after a long period of time, assembling the information in the form that the hon. Gentleman has requested. The performance of the steel industry depends on the performance of its users, and until such time as our car industry starts to make major inroads in its share of domestic and international markets, the steel industry will continue to have difficulty in getting volume production back to historical levels. Of course we are concerned about this, and that is why we have supported the steel industry over the last five years.

Mr. Madel: Instead of criticising General Motors in the way the Opposition Front Bench has done, ought not people to remember the extent of General Motors' investment in truck factories and component part factories here? Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is Government policy to do things that encourage more General Motors investment in this country?

Mr. Butcher: The Government can do a number of things to encourage General Motors to increase its investment in the United Kingdom, but I am bound to echo the remarks of my right hon. Friend that the onus is on General Motors to increase the British content of its United

Kingdom products and to increase the share of the British market which it satisfies from its British assembly plants. We welcome the great strides the company has taken in the commercial vehicles sector and in particular I should mention the great innovations it has made in electrically driven vehicles.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the Minister agree that one of the problems concerns the policy of the multinationals in relation to putting up "screwdriver" plants? Is he aware that many people buy Ford Capris and Granadas believing they are buying British-made cars? What are the Government doing to remedy this situation? Is it not true that they are soft in dealing with multinationals, and is it not about time they were tougher, in the interests not only of British workers and British consumers, but in the interests of the economy?

Mr. Butcher: In the context of the original question and the question posed by the hon. Gentleman, we have some weaponry available to tackle this problem. The Trade Descriptions Act 1972 requires imports bearing a United Kingdom name or mark also to bear a conspicuous indication of their country of origin. I am advised that enforcement of the Act is via the local authorities. There are no central statistics on prosecutions, but three recent cases in the west midlands were taken up precisely to attack the issue of badged cars.

Diesel Engines (Exports)

14. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the exports prospects for British-made diesel engines of all kinds.

Mr. Butcher: Detailed assessments of market prospects are a matter for the companies themselves. I note, however, that the industry has an excellent record in this difficult market exporting engines and components worth some £700 million a year, either directly or as parts of other products. This amounts to about 70 per cent. of its production. British diesel engine companies are at the forefront of new technology and new products, including engines for the growing diesel car and van markets, and my hon. Friend can be proud of the contribution made by his constituency to the sector's success. I am therefore confident of the industry's ability to sustain its substantial export performance.

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Will he join me in congratulating Perkins Engines of Peterborough on the production of its 10 millionth diesel engine? That is more than any other company in the world has produced. Will he also bear in mind that about 80 per cent. of everything produced by Perkins is exported? If the company is to build on that enviable record, it will need less volatility in exchange rates.

Mr. Butcher: I join my hon. Friend in congratulating Perkins on its performance. I visited the plant last year and was impressed in particular by the engineering capability. The company has a magnificent export record. Exchange rates are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I hope my hon. Friend was encouraged, particularly in the context of Perkins, by the recent changes that we made in streamlining the approvals procedure in ATP and by the moves we are making on soft loan facilities.

Dr. Godman: The question refers to diesel engines of any kind. With regard to marine diesel engines, if the press speculation on the re-engining of the QE2 in West Germany is correct, will the Minister urge upon the Cunard company a policy of specifying British engines? Would that not be a marvellous export order for the British marine engine industry?

Mr. Butcher: I am not in a position today to speculate. There has already been enough speculation on that question.

Nuclear Power (Inquiries)

3.30 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I beg to move

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable persons desiring to give evidence or make representations to public inquiries concerning or relating to the nuclear power industry to obtain such information and advice as they reasonably require in order to present their case; and for connected purposes.

There have been several inquiries involving the nuclear power industry in recent years, perhaps the most notable among them being the Windscale and Sizewell inquiries, although in Scotland considerable attention was given to the inquiry at Torness and to the proposals to test bore for high level radioactive waste disposal in the Galloway hills.

At all these inquiries the proposals of the nuclear or generating authorities were the subject of considerable scrutiny and challenge by objectors, including environmental groups and, on occasions, local authorities. I share the view expressed by Mr. Justice Parker in his report on the Windscale inquiry that the public interest was served by the fully developed case that the objectors deployed and that it was important that the validity of the applicant's case was thoroughly examined and investigated.

Mr. Justice Parker also drew attention to the clear disparity of resources available between nuclear establishments or generating authorities on the one hand and objectors on the other. The main purpose of the Bill is to try to some extent to redress the imbalance in two major ways. First, it would allow greater access to information which might reasonably be required for the presentation of a case; secondly, it would permit the use of public resources to allow objectors access to legal advice and technical expertise which would enable them to present an effective case.

Secrecy by public bodies is a subject that has often been discussed in the House since I was elected. Experience shows that the nuclear industry is one of the most difficult from which to prise information. If passed, the Bill would be of general application, but it is not unnatural from a constituency viewpoint that I have had in mind the forthcoming public inquiry into the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay. Some events since that was announced illustrate the need for the proposal that I am making.

Let us consider, for example, the response of the director of the Dounreay establishment when he was asked recently for details of all radioactive emissions since the plant opened and for details of all accidents, incidents or shutdowns in the existing small reprocessing plant. He replied by letter:

"As the information you request could possibly be related to the public inquiry, I cannot give you the information, apart from saying that much has already been published."

Surely here we have an anomalous and ridiculous position. The Atomic Energy Authority is unwilling to impart information which it must have readily to hand and which has been published. Rather than hand it over, it will force potential objectors with limited resources to spend valuable time and effort in an attempt to trace the information. It is equally clear from the reply that not all the information has been published, so some information which might be relevant in the presentation of the case at an inquiry may not be available.

I do not necessarily blame the director for taking that line, because undoubtedly he has received legal advice on what he should do when faced with such a request. No one is suggesting that the Atomic Energy Authority should embark upon argument and cross-examination by correspondence, but if there were a provision under which information could be made available that would prevent the unnecessary fears and suspicions which arise inevitably when it appears that someone is holding something back. The Bill would also remove any fear that there might subsequently be cross-examination by letter.

Since British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and the UKAEA submitted the planning application, they have published a glossy brochure, entitled "Supplementary Information", which includes some environmental issues concerning the outline planning application for a European demonstration fast reactor fuel reprocessing plant at Dounreay, Caithness.

The information in the brochure is ostensibly helpful and expands on the bare bones of a planning application, but the consultants engaged by the three islands authorities in the north of Scotland found the information far from adequate. Indeed, one of the consultant teams, which was based at Aberdeen university, when discussing waste management and discharge from the proposed plant, concluded that the information was

"seriously defective, particularly in relation to the quality and quantity of substances which will be discharged from the site as waste. Much of the description relates to the present situation at Dounreay and does not attempt to predict in precise terms the wastes and effluents from the new process."

If such information exists, it would be highly relevant to an inquiry and it should be made available to the public. The public should not be forced to prise information out shortly before or even during an inquiry. One of the reasons for the considerable time taken at the Sizewell inquiry was that as objectors acquired more information, so the Central Electricity Generating Board had to produce yet more evidence in reply. Time could be saved if information was made available earlier.

The consultants that I have mentioned, having produced their report, were invited by the UKAEA to go to Risley to discuss an environmental impact assessment. We have ascertained that such an impact exists, but those who attended on behalf of the consultants and local authorities were shown only a contents page of the assessment, and the contents of the contents page must remain confidential. Even that limited information is therefore not being given greater public currency. It might be made public, but when?

Those who attended the meeting also noted the vast array of scientific, technical and legal expertise available to the UKAEA. One of the planning officials in an islands council which I represent said that he could not help contrasting that vast array of expertise with the fact that he and some of his officials must read up on nuclear physics in their spare time. There is a tremendous imbalance in terms of expertise and financial resources. We must have the resources necessary to engage legal and technical assistance when presenting a case on a matter as important as this. We seek an extension of legal aid provisions to facilitate that.

I accept some of the criticisms about the amount of time taken at inquiries. Regulations could bring objectors under one umbrella so that there is no duplication of evidence. A common database could also be established and the key issues could be established before the inquiry.

Nuclear power developments are the source of considerable public anxiety and it is essential that inquiries are fair, and seen to be fair. Fairness will be established only if it is felt that one side is not fighting blindfold or with one hand tied behind its back.

After the Windscale inquiry, Mr. Justice Parker said that he was unable, within the terms of reference, to make recommendations about assistance that might be given to objectors, but he stated unequivocally that if objectors' resources were drained, a fully developed case could not be presented and that that could prejudice the public interest. My Bill would seek to serve the public interest by ensuring that resources and information were made available so that a fully developed case could be presented at any such inquiry.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman seek to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Skinner: No. It is a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it later.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. James Wallace, Mr. David Alton, Mr. A. J. Beith, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mr. Gordon Wilson and Mr. Chris Smith.

NUCLEAR POWER (INQUIRIES)

Mr. James Wallace accordingly presented a Bill to enable persons desiring to give evidence or make representations to public inquiries concerning or relating to the nuclear power industry to obtain such information and advice as they reasonably require in order to present their case; and for connected purposes.

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday next and to be printed. [Bill 211.]

Mr. Speaker: I shall now take the point of order.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that it is late in the Session and that some ten-minute Bills are unopposed because they have very little chance of being passed, but an important question of principle and democracy is involved which affects the two parties represented here.

On a matter of such importance as we have just heard about from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), I should have thought that you would encourage a Member of the Social Democratic party, probably the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who is opposed to what has just been said by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, to give his view of the matter. It is important that we should hear the views of both sides of the alliance. On every occasion that you have found it possible to do so you have called a Member of the Social Democratic party and a Member of the Liberal party. As they are so bitterly divided over this question, I think that you should give both of them an opportunity to present their points of view.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has been provoked.

Mr. Maclennan: I am very grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to intervene over what is an abuse of the orders of the House. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has attempted to attribute to me views which, under a point of order, I could not possibly answer, nor indicate the extent of my agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness to what was said by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland now has an opportunity to put his case—but briefly, please.

House of Commons (Jurisdiction)

3.43 pm

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It concerns the interpretation of the proper jurisdiction of this House. I refer to the motion on the Order Paper for debate this afternoon, the crisis in southern Africa, which seeks to conceal the discussion of issues for which Her Majesty's Government bear no obvious or formal responsibility by reference to Britain's isolation in three organisations—the Commonwealth, the European Community and the United Nations.

The position relating to the Commonwealth is set out clearly in "Erskine May", which says that the authority of Parliament over all matters and persons within its jurisdiction, formerly unlimited, has now been severely limited in two respects: first, by the Statute of Westminster 1981 and, secondly, by the European Communities Act 1972.

"Erskine May" is quite specific about the Statute of Westminster. It says:

"it is in accord with the established constitutional position that no law hereafter made by the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall extend to any of the said Dominions as part of the law of that Dominion otherwise than at the request and with the consent of that Dominion."

There are two interesting statements on the European Community position. On 10 March 1983, in answer to a question by my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

"the European Parliament has no business to discuss the internal political affairs of a member state."

Later he said:

"we are not prepared to allow the European Parliament to interfere in the affairs of Northern Ireland, or the internal affairs of another country."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1983; Vol. 38, c. 937-38.]

That remains our position.

On 13 December 1983 the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a speech rather than making a point of order. Will he put his point of order to me?

Mr. Lloyd: I must say what the Prime Minister said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has given me the reference. Will he make his point of order?

Mr. Lloyd: My point of order is that the House has no jurisdiction over a country the independence of which was firmly and clearly established in 1910 and reaffirmed by the Statute of Westminster, and which left the Commonwealth in 1961. It is perfectly clear from what the Government have said that they disapprove of legislatures interfering in the domestic affairs of other states. Finally, it is contrary to section 2 of the United Nations charter. It is also contrary to justice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot answer the last part of the hon. Gentleman's point of order. However, I look at every motion on the Order Paper. I looked at this one, and it is perfectly in order for the House to discuss what is a matter of foreign policy.

Southern Africa

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

I have a long list of speakers. It is only a half-day debate and I have no authority to control the length of speeches, but I hope that Back Benchers will take no more than 10 minutes. Perhaps Front-Bench speakers will help by shortening their speeches, because there are two Front-Bench speeches at the beginning and two to wind up the debate.

3.46 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I beg to move,

That this House regrets that the conduct of Her Majesty's Government over sanctions against apartheid in South Africa has isolated Britain in the Commonwealth, the EEC and the United Nations.

First, I should congratulate the Foreign Secretary on his safe return from Nassau after what must have been wearying negotiations with the Prime Minister.

Just three months have passed since the House last debated these issues. At the time I said that the wind of change in southern Africa had become a hurricane. Since then the hurricane has doubled and redoubled in fury. Over 6,000 people have been arrested since the troubles began some 14 months ago, 760 have been killed, of whom 500 were blacks killed by President Botha's stormtroopers. Despite appeals from all over the world, including an appeal from Her Majesty's Government, the apartheid regime has hung the black poet Benjamin Moloise.

It is highly significant that the violence in South Africa has now spread far beyond the black townships to which it has been confined for most of the time since the second world war. The middle class coloured population in Athlone are now in revolt against the shooting the other day of three students aged 12, 16 and 19. The delay in burying them, caused by the South African Government, has sparked off a wave of revolutionary religious fundamentalism among the devout Moslems of the area. Violence is now creeping into the white residential areas. We read of whites arming themselves to shoot blacks if they feel it necessary. I fear that we are on the verge of a new and horrifying turn in this tragic cycle of events. The blacks have now found a new and effective weapon in boycotts, which are already affecting more than 60 towns, mainly in the eastern Cape.

South Africa was once regarded in more senses than one as a gold mine for foreign investment; it is now a quagmire. It has become the first debtor nation in the world to default unilaterally on its debts. It is now re-establishing exchange control to prevent foreign companies from repatriating their profits. I hope that Her Majesty's Government will listen to the words of Chief Buthelezi whom they often quote as a black leader they respect. He said on television last night that Britain and the Western world must not permit the private banks to reschedule South African debts without first exacting a price from the South African Government in the form of a dialogue with the leaders of black opinion there.

Wiser firms involved in finance and commerce in South Africa are already pulling out. American and British banks and businesses are beginning to close or reduce their operations in South Africa. Only the other day, 10 of the biggest American multinational corporations, led by General Motors and IBM, banded together to work for the

end of apartheid, and Sainsbury's has now followed the Co-op in beginning to cut out South African goods from its shops.

Those private sanctions, as the Foreign Secretary admitted in a recent article in *The Sunday Times*, have already had a powerful and direct impact on white opinion in South Africa. Afrikaans as well as English-speaking business men are not just calling for an end to apartheid, they are engaged in talks with the African National Congress. They have visited Zambia for such talks several times in recent weeks.

The reality of the new situation was well and forcefully set out by probably the most prominent of Afrikaner business men, Dr. Anton Rupert, who said recently:

"Apartheid is dead, but the corpse stinks and it must be buried, not embalmed."

Perhaps the most startling transformation of all in South Africa is that taking place in the Dutch Reform Church, which was once the seedbed of the theology of apartheid but which is now planning to send a mission to talk to the ANC leaders.

Only two people still refuse to talk to the ANC—the President of South Africa and the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The British Prime Minister has become the only apologist Dr. Botha can now count on in the outside world. When, in August, President Botha demonstrated that he had led our Prime Minister up the garden path, and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office criticised his speech, the Foreign Office news department was compelled to retract her views.

Time and time again, the Government have committed themselves to the hollow sham that they call constructive engagement, although President Botha has broken every promise he has made to the British Government over recent years. Just over a year ago, the Prime Minister met President Botha at Chequers. When she reported to the House on his visit, she said:

"On Namibia, we agreed that early independence for Namibia was desirable and should be achieved as soon as possible under peaceful conditions. We also agreed that all foreign forces should be withdrawn from the countries in southern Africa so that their peoples can settle their destinies without outside interference. The withdrawal of South African forces from Angola is an important first step in this process."—[*Official Report*, 5 June 1984; Vol. 61, c. 157.]

The Prime Minister described her talks with President Botha as leading to an agreement on the issues that I have just mentioned, but what has happened since? President Botha has broken every agreement to which she then referred in the House. He has set up a puppet Government in Namibia at Windhoek, contrary to the undertakings that he has given to the British Government and the contact group in Europe. He has invaded the independent sovereign state of Botswana with the raid on Gaborone. South Africa has repeatedly invaded Angola to help the rebel forces there and on one occasion recently attacked American oil installations at Cabinda. South Africa has broken the Nkomati accord with Mozambique by giving armed help to the rebels there, and it has boasted in public that it has broken all those agreements with the British Prime Minister. Incidentally, South Africa has also broken an agreement endorsed when one of its diplomats stood bail for two South African agents who were due for trial for offences against British law. On no occasion have the British Government even referred to those breaches of agreement, still less taken action to punish the South African Government for their behaviour.

The Foreign Secretary told the Conservative party conference the other day:

"No one has spoken more forcefully and more directly to South African leaders about the need for real change than Margaret Thatcher. I know because I was there when she gave them a piece of her mind."

That is a gift which I would be very cautious in accepting.

Despite all the events to which I have referred, the Prime Minister is sticking to constructive engagement, although, according to a report in *The Times* today—I was unable to obtain confirmation from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office — the final communiqué from Nassau yesterday stated:

"President Reagan's policy of 'constructive engagements' had failed to end South Africa's intransigence over Namibia as well as over apartheid."

What we need now, and what the whole world is asking for, is a policy of constructive disengagement from South Africa. Yet when the Community Foreign Ministers met a few weeks ago and proposed the withdrawal of defence attachés from Pretoria, the Minister of State refused to accept the proposal. The Community press agency reports him as justifying his refusal by saying that

"the presence of military attachés"

was useful

"in particular to convey information about possible South African intervention in neighbouring countries."

He does not seem to have taken the slightest notice when the interventions were blazoned on the front pages of every newspaper and boasted about by President Botha in the South African parliament. I gather that it took 10 days of knockdown, drag-out argument between the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister to get the Prime Minister finally to bring Britain into line.

I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister disavowed the arguments of the Minister of State, but I wish to ask the Foreign Secretary this: if he believes it right to withdraw our military attachés from South Africa, why does he allow South African military attachés to continue serving in London? Is it so that they can inform the South African Government about our possible intervention in neighbouring countries? If not, what is it? I hope that the Foreign Secretary will answer that question?

The Prime Minister has just gone to the Commonwealth conference in Nassau in her most "Rhoda-the-Rhino" mood; perhaps it would be more up to date to describe her as "Rambona". Once again, as on Rhodesia, on Hong Kong and during talks with the Government of Eire, she has painted herself into a corner and relied on the Foreign Secretary to carry her out—a heavy burden for him to carry. In Canada the other day, I noticed that her faithful St. Bernard — the Prime Minister's official press spokesman at Nassau—told the press there:

"We're used to being shot at. We're riddled with the bullets of isolation. We survive and enjoy it."

He is a true servant of his mistress.

According to the newspapers in Nassau, the Prime Minister again trotted out all the arguments that were drafted by Pretoria to justify opposition to sanctions against South Africa. They include the argument that sanctions would drive the South African Government into the laager. Has she not noticed that President Botha is in the laager, that the South African Government are firing from behind the wagons there, and that there are 800 people dead to prove this point?

The Prime Minister says that sanctions will hurt the blacks more than the whites, although everywhere in South Africa a majority of blacks, according to polls

[Mr. Denis Healey]

carried out not only by *The Sunday Times* but by a South African Government-sponsored institution, support the sanctions. Sanctions are supported by all the black trade unions in South Africa for which the Government attempt to claim some credit. They are supported by Bishop Tutu and even more so by the front-line states which may well suffer when sanctions are applied. I should like to quote in this respect a most eloquent letter from President Kaunda of Zambia to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in which he said:

"Yes, we will be hurt by these sanctions but we will suffer more if economic sanctions as a peaceful weapon for change are not applied. The result of the explosion will be far more destructive than the injury that economic sanctions can cause to us."

The British Government's attempt to speak for the black majority in South Africa is really a reversion to old colonial habits when we thought that we had the right to speak for the inhabitants of all colonies. Thank God the people of South Africa now have some institutions through which they can speak for themselves. The overwhelming majority have called upon the outside world to apply sanctions.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I know that the right hon. Gentleman would not intentionally wish to mislead the House. He is correct in his reporting of the last opinion poll in *The Sunday Times*, in which only 400 urban blacks were asked their opinion. Certainly, about 70 per cent. said that they favoured sanctions, but the right hon. Gentleman omitted to tell the House that previous opinion polls, including that taken from the Schlemmer report, said just the opposite. He has not yet mentioned the opinion of Chief Buthelezi who is in London and who represents 5 million Zulus. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, Chief Buthelezi is very much against sanctions. Will not the right hon. Gentleman see both sides of the story?

Mr. Healey: Of course I accept that Chief Buthelezi opposes sanctions—he said so last night. He also said last night that the West should use the difficulty that the South Africans have over rescheduling their debts to bargain with the South African Government for an improvement in the political situation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that fact.

Of course I did not claim that every single black in South Africa supported sanctions. I said that the great majority do support sanctions and I referred to the organisations that have spoken for them. Incidentally, I include Bishop Tutu who was quoted in our debate in another direction in April by the Minister of State and I have just quoted the words of President Kaunda.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Healey: I shall give way regularly because I enjoy interventions and enjoy even more replying to them. However, Mr. Speaker, you have asked me not to waste time, so I shall continue.

We are told that President Botha himself last night used the argument that sanctions could lead to the West losing valuable minerals, but there are no minerals that South Africa currently supplies that could not be replaced by other sources, often by very much more worthy producers such as Zimbabwe and Brazil. We are told that sanctions would cause unemployment in Britain but the fact is that, if we cannot produce a change in the South African Government's position by peaceful means, the resulting violence would cost Britain everything that it now possesses in South Africa. Even now, we have more trade with black Africa than with South Africa.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage) *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*——

Mr. Healey: You have asked me, Mr. Speaker, to confine my remarks to the subject, so I shall continue. I am grateful for the support from my lofty friend the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark).

Finally we are told that sanctions will not work, and yet they have worked. We have the Foreign Secretary's word for it in his article the other day in *The Sunday Times*. He said:

"Market forces are already exerting lasting testing pressure on South Africa."

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: They are not sanctions.

Mr. Healey: Oh, so what the American banks have done and the disinvestment by companies in Britain and throughout the rest of the world are not sanctions. The Government's attitude reminds me very much of their attitude to the other great African problem—they rely upon and applaud private action to help the starving in Africa but reject Government action to serve the same purpose, although that action is desperately needed.

In the end, the Prime Minister was compelled to give way to the rest of the Commonwealth. No doubt, the Foreign Secretary played a useful role in persuading her to change her mind because otherwise the rest of the Commonwealth would have gone ahead without her. As *The Times* today points out, she ruined the effect of her concessions by describing the sanctions as "signals"—she used to like the word "measures" better but she now calls them "signals". She said that they were minute and said, in her best Lady Bracknell voice, that she had moved only "a tiny little bit". She said that it was worth paying a small price to keep the Commonwealth together. The Prime Minister has an unfailing flair for choosing the most helpful word or phrase to describe any situation in which she is involved.

There is no question that the article in *The Times* was right, as I am sure that many Conservative Members would agree, when it stated:

"she has the . . . failing of sometimes not appearing to think at all about the requirements of tomorrow. These requirements are simple. Never gloat over a diplomatic victory. Never mock the mediators. Mrs. Thatcher broke both of these rules this week."

Thinking of the difficulty that the Prime Minister has caused for herself and Britain by her behaviour on this issue I am not surprised that not a single African thinks better of her, but, rather, thinks worse of her and, alas, of her Government as a result. The other day Bishop Tutu said when leaving his talks with her that she had persuaded him that she thought "You blacks are expendable"—I quote his words. Yesterday there was a moving account in the *Financial Times* about the reaction to her behaviour of the coloured population in Athlone.

The Prime Minister has infuriated blacks and whites alike by her behaviour. How typical of her that she should

now be in New York to lecture President Reagan on how to make friends and influence people. Her graceless behaviour in Nassau has given her only six months' grace. The Commonwealth will meet in six months to take the next step of sanctions. The Commonwealth countries have listed the sanctions that they hope to take. The Australian Prime Minister has already announced that he plans unilaterally to take such steps next year. The *Daily Telegraph* today is right to say that there is not the slightest chance that South Africa will begin progress to reform itself within this period.

It stated:

"It will not be easy to step off the escalator in six months' time if Dr. Botha is deemed unresponsive to 'dialogue' and the trigger list of much more deadly sanctions . . . is invoked.

Mrs. Thatcher may have had an escape clause written into the contract but it could be hard to explain why she wants to use it, and harder still if a third stage is reached where more and tougher sanctions are called for."

The Minister of State put his finger on the nub of the problem when he spoke as a Back Bencher, not a Minister, on 8 December 1978. He said:

"I do not believe that one can have selective sanctions"—

which is what the Commonwealth has just imposed. He continued:

"If it is simply a cosmetic operation,"—

as everyone now says it is—

"it will not be effective. It would not lead to the ending of apartheid, or persuade the South African Government to see the error of their ways and demolish the existing political and social system. It will simply be a cosmetic exercise which will be increasingly ignored and which will inevitably lead to further demands for more comprehensive economic sanctions, which the Government and other Western Governments could not in logic resist once they had accepted the principle itself." [*Official Report*, 8 December 1978; Vol. 959, c. 1743.]

The Minister of State, not for the first time, was quite right. His words were prophetic, because without effective and real pressure, exerted above all by Britain, as one of the leading experts at Witwatersrand pointed out yesterday, the combination of unrest among the blacks, the troubles and concern among the white business men and the private pressure applied by the market will not be sufficient to bring about a dialogue in time. Only a dialogue between the Government and the African National Congress has any hope of bringing this tragedy to an end.

Mr. Shultz made this point in a recent speech in the United States. He said that the choice is between dialogue and revolution and I beg the Government to face this fact in the knowledge that their self-imposed isolation on this issue is a source of great shame to the great majority of the British people. Unless in six months' time the Government join the rest of the world in effective action against apartheid, they will not only compound that shame but will carry a great responsibility for the bloodshed and anarchy that will inevitably engulf the whole of South Africa.

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the Commonwealth accord on South Africa and especially the call to initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government."

Having heard the closing section of the speech made by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), it is difficult to believe that he recognises the terms of the accord arrived at in Nassau, calling for precisely the kind of dialogue that he recommended. It is also difficult for us to believe that those matters were the subject of unanimous agreement at Nassau between all the members of the Commonwealth.

However, I can agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the rightness of the House debating South Africa today. I agree that the issues before the House are of crucial importance for the future of Africa and for the Commonwealth, and of direct and real significance for the people of this country. Nobody who has seen the continuing tragic pattern of violence in South Africa which, night after night, has been visible on television screens around the world, can be in any doubt about that.

The Government share with the House, as with our partners in the Commonwealth and the Community, total abhorrence and loathing of apartheid. We all wish to see fundamental peaceful change in South Africa at the earliest possible date. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made that clear, as she has done on many earlier occasions, at this week's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. The right hon. Gentleman sought to present my right hon. Friend as the only apologist for the apartheid regime, but nothing could be further from the truth than that. All my right hon. Friend's colleagues at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting were deeply impressed by the strength and sincerity of her presentation of the case against apartheid.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East quoted the words of Chief Buthelezi. He said that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right, that he fully supported her, and that her approach was the more humane. I invite the House to consider this topic on that basis, because it is undoubtedly right. There is no division in the House about the ends that we seek—the division is over the means.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has quoted Chief Buthelezi, but why has he not also quoted Mrs. Winnie Mandela who today made it plain that she and those for whom she speaks object to and resent the Prime Minister's claim to speak for blacks in South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not my function to quote each and every spokesman for South Africa. I invite the hon. Gentleman to accept, because it is foolish not to do so, that there is no division between the two sides of the House about the objective that we seek. Apartheid is a system that we cannot seek to uphold, and one that the Prime Minister, together with all her colleagues in government, wishes to see come to an end.

I was struck by another feature of the speech made by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East. Judging by the closing sections of his speech, on means as well there is now widespread agreement about what the next step should be. The first and most important task is to promote within South Africa a political dialogue—I agree that we need dialogue, not revolution, in South Africa—between the South African Government and representatives of the black community. That is the way to open the road to full and equal participation by South Africa's blacks in the government of their country.

If that dialogue is to succeed, there needs also to be an end to violence by all sides in South Africa. We have

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

always regarded it, in the Community and in the Commonwealth, as a prime requirement to secure a clear endorsement of the need for that dialogue to take place in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. That applies both to the law enforcement techniques of the South African Government and to the activities of the ANC. Let me say today to the ANC that a declaration on its part of willingness to suspend violence to help create an atmosphere in which the dialogue called for by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East can succeed would be well received by the international community. I urge it to make such a declaration and to suspend violence so that we can give peace a chance.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has, interestingly, been urging the ANC, and offering it advice. Will he meet its representatives personally in London, or elsewhere, to put those points of view to them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been urging them, as we urge other such groups, to suspend violence because in those circumstances the possibility of a meeting becomes realistic. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I have answered the question plainly. We do not engage in contacts with organisations that engaging in violence. It is for that reason that I am urging the ANC today to make a declaration suspending its policy of violence.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall not give way because, like the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, I have to conclude my speech in a reasonable time.

It has been our consistent aim to strengthen and support the process of peaceful change. We cannot force this change on South Africa from outside. Only the South African Government can take the necessary further steps towards establishing a democratic, non-racial, truly representative system of government in that country. We cannot dictate to them. They are more likely to be willing to take such steps if we on our side are willing to acknowledge what they have done so far.

Important steps have already been taken. The Mixed Marriages Act, the Political Interference Act and section 16 of the Immorality Act have been repealed. Almost all job reservations have been removed and forced removals have been suspended. Abolition of influx control and the pass laws have been recommended to the President by his advisory council. Leasehold and freehold rights are to be extended to urban blacks and common citizenship for all South Africans is to be restored. The South African Government have stated their willingness to share decision-making with all communities and to negotiate with black political leaders. Therefore, it makes no sense for Labour Members to shout and bay as though those changes had not taken place.

It may be said that these changes are not before time and that more needs to be done, and I agree with that. However, I should like to hear the Labour party agreeing with us in recognising the significance of the moves that are already taking place. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East spoke about the concept of constructive disengagement. Nothing could be less constructive than disengagement in the present situation in South Africa. Has the right hon. Gentleman not noticed the changes that have taken place in South Africa, and why is he not willing to give credit where credit is due?

I repeat that it is the South African Government whose attitude and ideas we must influence. It is for precisely that reason that we reject external economic or trade boycotts. So far from supporting and encouraging the process of peaceful change, such boycotts would encourage the South African Government to retreat from reform and to entrench themselves behind the ramparts of apartheid. We cannot tell the South Africans as the right hon. Gentleman seems to imply, to co-operate with us, or else. Their capacity for responding to that "or else" is all too clear.

There is a distinction which the right hon. Gentleman fails to identify between the impact of external pressures dictated in a mandatory fashion from outside, and the impact of market forces. There is no doubt that changes are taking place in South Africa as a result of the impact on that country of economic judgments being made in the world outside. Those judgments are recognised as something to which the South African Government have to respond because they are a consequence of the policies of the South African Government. They are not judgments imposed by force and coercion. That is the distinction between mandatory economic sanctions and sanctions of the kind implicit in the judgment of the market place.

That is the case that we have been getting across with increasing success. Governments within the European Community and the Commonwealth have increasingly come to recognise that what is needed is not punitive sanctions, but plain political signals, properly spelt out. It is on the basis of that approach, an approach which has served to consolidate a united position within the European Community, that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting at Nassau. The Prime Minister will, of course, make a full report of that meeting in due course, but I should like now to say something about the conclusions reached at that meeting on the matter of South Africa.

Two points were clear in our discussions from the outset. First, the Commonwealth was united in its wish to see a fundamental peaceful change in South Africa at the earliest possible date. Secondly, we all wanted to find practical ways in which the Commonwealth could help to achieve that goal. Of course, there was some tough talking at Nassau about the best way forward towards that goal. There were widely differing positions to be reconciled. Some thought that full economic and trade boycotts should be applied, but others shared our firm view that that was not the way to encourage the process of peaceful change that we all want to see.

An important point to emerge from that conference was that all sides wished and were ready to reach a common position. So far from being isolated, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was one of the architects of the agreement that was reached during an intensive series of weekend discussions. That is the reality which the right hon. Gentleman seems to have brushed aside.

That united position is set out in the Commonwealth accord on southern Africa, published on the evening of 20 October 1985, and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. I emphasise that that accord has been endorsed and welcomed by every country in the Commonwealth. A united Commonwealth has sent a clear political signal to South Africa. That represents a substantial achievement by the Commonwealth, and a

substantial achievement by this Government. None of that would have been possible without the vision, courage and steady perseverance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Like it or not, the Prime Minister's role at that conference was rightly applauded by other Heads of Government at the conclusion of the weekend discussions and the House should be ready to acknowledge that today.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): If that is so, why was the Prime Minister so dismissively contemptuous about the movements that she had made to bring that about?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was not dismissively contemptuous. She acknowledged the very hard work done by all Heads of Government to reach an agreement, and the other Heads of Government have acknowledged her role in the same manner.

I shall tell the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) how the accord is constructed. The first key point of the accord is a plain condemnation of apartheid, of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, and of its continuing raids into neighbouring states.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The accord has three positive features. The first is an agreement on the need to end the violence, the second an agreement on a plan to promote dialogue, and the third an agreement on measures that will send an effective signal to Pretoria.

The accord calls on the South African Government to take action to dismantle apartheid, to end the state of emergency and to release Nelson Mandela and others in detention. All those are steps which we have strongly urged on the South African Government. The accord calls also for political freedom and an end to the ban on the African National Congress and other political parties, but the accord places that firmly in the context of the renunciation of violence by all sides. I want to emphasise that point very strongly. As I said earlier, that has been one of our prime requirements.

The agreement reached at Nassau is based firmly in the context of the renunciation of violence by all sides and reflects the Government's whole approach to dialogue in South Africa. Without an end to the turbulence and repression which we have seen in South Africa, there is no chance of successful dialogue.

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): The Foreign Secretary is confusing us. As I read the communiqué, there is a sharp distinction between the point which calls specifically for a lifting of the existing ban on the ANC and the next point, which calls for the initiation of a process of dialogue within the context of a suspension of violence. The lifting of the ban on the ANC is quite separate from the other point. Is the Foreign Secretary deliberately confusing the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Lady must acknowledge that the accord sets out quite clearly as one of its most important components the fact that all those recommendations should be set firmly in the context of the renunciation of violence by all sides. If there is no end to the turbulence and the repression that we have seen in South Africa, there is no chance for successful dialogue.

The second key point in the accord is the decision to set up a group of eminent Commonwealth persons with the task of encouraging and carrying forward that dialogue. A number of Commonwealth leaders will oversee that important initiative. The Prime Minister will for this purpose join President Kaunda and her colleagues Prime Ministers Hawke, Pindling, Mulroney, Gandhi and Mugabe and will consult our partners about the composition of the proposed group. The House will be informed as soon as decisions have been taken.

I stress that the Commonwealth is not prescribing the form of political settlement in South Africa. That is for the peoples of South Africa as a whole to determine.

The third key point in the accord is the programme of common action in agreed measures to underline a clear political message. I remind the House that before the Nassau meeting we had reached an agreement with our European partners on a list of measures which consolidated and added to the action that we were already taking. The list in the Commonwealth accord adds only two new measures—no further imports of krugerrands, and no Government funding for trade missions, fairs and exhibitions to South Africa. The cost of the action on krugerrands is very limited and we do not expect the withdrawal of financial support for trade missions and participation in fairs to result in a significant loss in new business in the context of our overall trade.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: British exporters remain free to exercise their commercial judgment on trade with South Africa, and many do so with taxpayers' support. These measures are not economic and trade sanctions which would affect that freedom. They are a very long way from mandatory sanctions, to which we remain firmly opposed. As the hon. Member for Merthr Tydfyl and Rhymmney (Mr. Rowlands) rightly told the House on 28 June 1978 when he was a member of the previous Administration: "any wide-ranging economic sanctions against South Africa could have important and serious consequences for the United Kingdom economy."—[*Official Report*, 28 June 1978; Vol. 952, c. *554*.]

The important fact about the measures agreed at Nassau is that, taken together, this comprehensive Commonwealth package gives South Africa the clearest possible signal of the need for rapid change. Let me again remind the House that the South African Government have acknowledged the need for changes. Our common aim at Nassau was therefore to get more movement.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that the trade in krugerrands is small because when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer he imposed VAT on trade in gold coins? Therefore, no one in his right mind would buy krugerrands at this moment. My right hon. and learned Friend is making a compelling case for the partial, as opposed to the full, imposition of sanctions, but those of us who have serious misgivings about the effectiveness or wisdom of any form of sanctions deserve a guarantee that there will be no further sanctions imposed, nor any full imposition of sanctions, on any review of these matters in six months' time. Only in that way will some of us be able to go along with what I regard as a regrettable precedent in breaking the principle that we have adopted on the imposition of sanctions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that my hon. Friend will have to make an extended contribution to the debate if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. I

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

appreciate his tribute to the effect of the imposition of value added tax. That reinforces my argument that the implications of the change in respect of krugerrands will be limited.

As for the more general matters which my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has raised, I was describing the set of measures on whih agreement was reached at Nassau. It consists in large part of measures positive and restrictive which have been in place for a long time, supplemented by those taken and agreed on in Luxembourg earlier this year. We are not committed to taking any further steps of that sort. Our approach is firmly in the context of the distinctions that I am making. There are distinctions betwen mandatory, economic and trade sanctions and boycotts—

Mr. Nelson *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —some of which have precisely the effects that are not intended—*[Interruption.]* Six months from now—

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I say again that the South African Government have acknowledged the need for change. Our common aim at Nassau, which is reflected in the agreement that we reached, was to get more movement. I make it equally plain that we are not extending an ultimatum to the South African Government. Nor are we washing our hands of the problem and leaving it at that. We want to see launched the dialogue of which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East spoke. We want to see it sustained, and we want to see it succeed. Six months from now there will be another meeting. Britain, Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, India, Zambia and Zimbabwe will then review the situation. If adequate progress has not been made by that time, some Governments have stated that they will consider the adoption of further measures.

It is our earnest hope that at that meeting we shall be able to take note of significant progress in South Africa. But whatever the conclusions of the meeting, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minster has made it clear that Britain is not committed to any of the further steps which other Governments have agreed to consider.

The conclusions of the Nassau conference, which I have tried to summarise, should commend themselves to the entire House. They are entirely consistent with the approach that the Government have adopted over a long period.

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The conclusions are designed to promote the fundamental changes which we all regard as necessary in South Africa to bring apartheid to an end. They are designed, not as a punishment, nor as a threat, but as an earnest signal of the need for change and of the Commonwealth's determination to help bring that about.

The Opposition began the debate by arguing that the Government were isolated in their approach to the problem of South Africa. The provisions of the Commonwealth accord make it plain that that allegation is palpably false. The approach that I have described is the one on which the 60 nations of the Commonwealth and the Community are at one with the Government. It is the one which we shall continue to pursue, and I commend it to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat my request for short contributions. I hope that speeches will not be longer than 10 minutes.

4.34 pm

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): I returned 10 days ago from taking part in a panel composed of what I hesitate to say were eminent persons, which seems to be a popular term at present. It directed itself to transnational corporations, South Africa and Namibia. The setting up of the panel had been agreed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and its report will shortly be going before that body. I am certain that the Foreign Secretary is already familiar with it. It is in that context that I want to examine what has been proposed in the Bahamas, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech this afternoon.

I have never heard the Foreign Secretary make a speech of such low quality. It showed inadequate understanding and a deep lack of concern about the problem that we are discussing. I have often praised the right hon. and learned Gentleman when I thought that he had done rather better than the Prime Minister, but on this occasion I cannot do so. In an intervention I quoted from the Commonwealth communiqué, and it seems—I am sure that this was inadvertent—that he has misled the House in dealing with some of the matters contained within it. He has argued that market forces are the factor that will count. In these days of interrelated world economies it is inevitable that market forces will involve Governments. The consequence of that understanding is something that the Government will have to appreciate sooner or later.

The panel of which I was a member was chaired by Malcolm Fraser, the former Prime Minister of Australia. It heard evidence for four days from bodies such as the International chamber of commerce and the South African chamber of commerce. The South African chamber presented a view which I would regard as distinctly more enlightened than that set out by the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It knows on which side its bread is buttered.

Dame Judith Hart: Exactly. It knows the way that things are going. South Africa's long term interests can lie only in achieving a multiracial and equal society. As the commercial companies in South Africa realise, there is no future in trying to sustain the system of apartheid. Therefore, South African business wants an end to apartheid.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Does the right hon. Lady recognise the massive extent to which she is underlining the very argument that I was advancing? If South Africa is faced with the judgment of the world economy, and not with an armoury of sanctions that have been imposed politically, South Africa's business interests will be the foremost advocates of the change which both she and I want. The position will be reversed if mandatory sanctions are in place.

Dame Judith Hart: I take the Foreign Secretary's point. He leads me on to my next argument, which is that the most immediate factor that can have a real influence

on the South African economy and, therefore, on the greater readiness of the South African Government to change their policy, is the financial sector. I refer to the roll-over and rescheduling of debts. The recent refusal to take that course sent the rand plummeting. This has had serious and dramatic consequences on opinion among the white community in South Africa, the South African chamber of commerce, South African companies and our own transnational corporations.

The Bahamas Commonwealth communiqué includes the following statement:

"a ban on all government loans to the Government of South Africa and its agencies".

The crucial factor is not what the Government do directly. We have little direct involvement in loans to South Africa, but we have a close involvement with the Bank of England, which we are supposed to own, although one doubts that from time to time. We are much involved in any discussions that take place between the central banks. Talks are taking place now under the aegis of the International Bank of Settlements. Discussions are, I believe, going on in London today with the private banks. It is that, together with the Government's influence on the private banking sector and their readiness or unwillingness to be involved in what the IMF decides to do—because Governments, as members of the governing body of the IMF, influence and determine what it does—that will decide whether those South African debts are rolled over, rescheduled, or not.

The Foreign Secretary is quite right to emphasise the importance of market forces. Indeed, he may care to regard as a little cleverer than himself the opinion of Chase Manhattan and Citibank, which have got out, and which refused to roll over. They have detached themselves—disinvested — from South Africa. If the Foreign Secretary regards market forces as important, he may just care to lend an ear occasionally to what the most important elements in the market forces are themselves saying and doing.

The crucial factor is the financial sector, and the British Government are necessarily involved in what happens, within the context of market forces, to the rolling over and the rescheduling of those loans. They cannot avoid that. Either they will turn a blind eye, or they will say, as the United States Congress has recommended to the United States Government, that the IMF should not involve itself at all in any financial assistance to South Africa at present.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): The right hon. Lady is advocating a principle which, as I understand it, the IMF has steadfastly refused to follow in its relationship with any country at any time since its foundation. It makes its decisions dependent on financial criteria alone and refuses to consider political criteria, because once it started doing so it would be not only South Africa but about 90 member countries of the United Nations whose political regimes would quickly bring them into disrepute with the IMF.

Dame Judith Hart: I knew that I should not have given way, because the subject that the hon. Gentleman has raised could keep the House for half an hour—the supposed political impartiality of the IMF.

Our panel in New York was quite clear that the special facility that South Africa is asking from the IMF would require an examination of the spending of the South African Government. This conditionality could very well include the fact that it is spending rather too much on military and police activity and not enough on the things that would assist its own economy. Were the IMF to apply its normal conditionality to the request from South Africa for special assistance, that conditionality would rule out such assistance on all the criteria which have been applied to Tanzania, Nicaragua and the other countries which the IMF has not helped.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): And Argentina, after the Falklands.

Dame Judith Hart: And Argentina, indeed.

We recommended—again this is touched on in the report from the Bahamas—a ban on the sale and export of computer equipment capable of use by South Africa's military, police or security forces. The point that came to our attention was that it is not so much the sale and trade in these things that is sustaining apartheid, as the activities of the transnational corporations within South Africa, by manufacturing within South Africa the vehicles and the computer equipment and the dual use equipment. These transnational corporations have their headquarters in various countries: 142 of them are in Germany, 406 are in the United States and 364 are in the United Kingdom.

At the same time, the transnational corporations—here we have the Foreign Secretary's market forces again—within South Africa have by law to abide by the apartheid laws of that country, including the key point legislation—legislation which commits them, if they obey it, to the worst kind of oppressive measures adopted under apartheid. What our panel has recommended—I do not know what the General Assembly will do with our report—is that if a company's activities in South Africa, particularly in terms of computers, motor vehicles, oil, coal and, in the case of Namibia, all the other things that relate so desperately to that country, mean that, in order to keep the law, a company has to conform to regulations and laws which inherently sustain apartheid, it should seek to dissociate itself from those laws. If it cannot, it should get out. Otherwise, transnational corporations are positively, actively, every day sustaining apartheid. There is no way of avoiding that very simple fact. We recommend that in the end, after a year or so, if TNCs cannot do any of this, there should be sanctions, but that is a stage further on.

It must be noted—here again we have market forces for the Foreign Secretary — that 25 transnational corporations in the United Kingdom have already disinvested, together with 18 from the United States. I know that the Prime Minister is deeply concerned, and understandably from her own rather narrow point of view, about the effect, she says, on British industry and British employment if there were to be any imposition of direct sanctions against South Africa. I have already said that this is a very shortsighted and rather naive view, because the long-term interest of British industry lies in prosperity in a multiracial South Africa.

That, apart, there is another point of view on this issue—another way of looking at it. If the Prime Minister believes that our employment will be so deeply affected, clearly she must be concerned about what the transnational corporations see as being in their own interests, yet I doubt very much whether the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister—apart from talking to her husband perhaps—have really discussed this issue with the transnational corporations. I doubt whether either she or the Foreign

[Dame Judith Hart]

Secretary has enlisted the assistance of the Treasury direct in holding a dialogue with the Bank of England and the banks in Britain. They rely on market forces, but do they ever bother to talk to market forces?

Mr. Jackson *rose*——

Dame Judith Hart: No, I am sorry, I am not giving way again.

If they were to talk to market forces, they would discover that the business community here, like the business community in South Africa itself, is a great deal more enlightened and looking much more to the long term than they are themselves. If dialogue is in the air, there should be a pretty open dialogue with the market forces in Britain to find out what they say about it.

At the same time, if the transnational corporations are to respect this sui generis situation in South Africa—quite different from all other human rights abuses in the rest of the world, partly because they are the subject now of international law — it is impossible for them to perceive their self-interest without realising their own responsibility for the situation in South Africa.

There is much more going on in the United States. It is not only that Chase Manhatten and Citibank have disinvested; it is also that disinvestment is going apace. Mayor Koch of New York gave evidence to our panel. We asked him what his advice would be to the shareholders of the transnational corporations in South Africa. He said, "I would tell them to get out now before there's nothing left to take out." The Foreign Secretary may care to talk to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about that.

There is a real responsibility also on individuals in this country, because divestment—that is to say taking one's investments in shares out of companies which engage in the support of apartheid in South Africa — is a very dynamic factor indeed. The Conservative council at Oxford decided recently to divest its pension funds and everything else from companies engaged in South Africa. Universities, city councils and ordinary people can take such action.

One argument often used by people with less historical awareness than some others is that there is no use imposing sanctions because they do not work. Such people say, "Look what happened when the United States tried to impose sanctions on China; look what happened when the United States tried to impose technological sanctions on the Soviet Union; look what happened when the world tried to impose sanctions on Rhodesia."

Clearly, sanctions will not work if they are bilateral — one country to another, seeking to whip up the support of its friends. I was the Minister in charge during the year when we were trying to impose sanctions on Rhodesia, and I know that many factors were involved. A number came out in the Bingham report, but the key factor was that oil and other goods could get into Rhodesia through South Africa and Portuguese Angola and Mozambique. All the routes into Rhodesia were protected by, in effect, Fascist Governments.

The situation is different now. Only the sea routes could save South Africa, though the transport routes of the front-line states would need some support and development. I am not suggesting that things will come to that. I merely wish to dispose of the spurious argument that because sanctions did not work in Rhodesia they will not work in South Africa.

The Foreign Secretary disappointed the House. We expected a little more from him. Perhaps his speech was not a surprise. Perhaps he can do no more than follow in the steps of his leader. I wish that he would escape from the eagle eye of the Prime Minister and ask his officials to examine the matter. We will take action. I do not say that we will be forced into it by other Commonwealth Governments, but our own long-term enlightened self-interest lies in ending apartheid in South Africa by measures that are considerably stronger than those that came out of the meetings in the Bahamas.

4.52 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I wish that I could be as sure and confident as the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) is on every position that she takes, just as I wish that there was a Conservative council in Oxford, but there is not. I also wish that I could share the confidence of some of my hon. Friends on these matters.

I spent part of my childhood in South Africa, and I have recently revisited Namibia with the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). We are not debating an abstract matter of foreign affairs. We are talking about human beings, immensely complicated problems and the citizens of southern Africa, whether black, white or coloured. They are all South Africans, and this is not a colonial situation.

We have some responsibility. We were involved in the creation of the South African labyrinth and in the creation of the republic, which was regarded as the greatest liberal action in which the young Winston Churchill was involved. We were also much involved in the creation of Boer nationalism, the Afrikaans language movement and the recreation of the Dutch Reform Church. Our forefathers unwittingly helped to create apartheid, which is not a policy, but a religion, a faith, a belief.

It is ironic that Smuts, who was one of the leading creators of the League of Nations and the United Nations, and was a good friend of our country—we remember him with gratitude—unwittingly helped to create the tragedy that faces the world, this country, and, above all, the whole of southern Africa.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary referred briefly to Namibia. At least there is no substantial difference between the two sides of the House over Namibia. We support United Nations resolution 435 and regard the South African occupation as illegal. I think that the best thing that could be done in the short term to improve relations between the Government of South Africa and the Western world would be to renew the Contact Group and to renew negotiations on the basis of resolution 435. I believe that that could be possible. There is one difference between us: the Labour party recognises SWAPO as the one party, and we take the view, under the resolution, that there should be a genuinely free election.

No one can go to the war zone in northern Namibia and go back to South Africa without being haunted by the vast, looming tragedy.

I strongly oppose the imposition of economic sanctions. I cannot accept that they would be helpful except to those who wish to have revolution in southern Africa. I do not

see sanctions helping a society which is already going through a desperate economic and social revolution. Sanctions are part of the politics of negativism and I will have nothing to do with them.

However, I wish to impress on the Government the fact that we have an economic lever through our massive investment in South Africa. We have far greater influence and respect in all communities than we often realise. Perhaps we should use that positively to assist and encourage peaceful change—a development about which there is no division among those who are seriously concerned about the problems of South Africa.

We cannot ignore the mounting tragedy. We must do what we can to assist and encourage peaceful and progressive change. I hope that the debate will send a message to the moderate and peaceful people in South Africa who want moderate and peaceful change. Let us tell them, "We are prepared to assist you and to be on your side." That does not mean economic sanctions. It does not mean—[HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] It means using our economic position and our political position. [HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] That can be done and it has been done by some companies. That, rather than the politics of war and negativism which is preached by some, is the way forward.

5 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) spoke with knowledge and experience of South Africa and with sympathy for the problems of South Africa, but he left us with a dilemma, because at the end of his speech he pointed to the extent of British economic involvement and interest in South Africa and the potential that lies there to operate a lever. But a lever is not a lever if it cannot be pulled. The hon. Member posed himself a question. He imparted to us his thinking at what I hope was an intermediate stage, because if he reflects further he will be forced in the end to the conclusion that some measures will have to be taken which will bring real pressure to bear and which actually force that lever.

There are many brutal regimes and many police states in the world. South Africa has many fellows in the club of police states, and some of them do not enjoy some of the things that South Africa still enjoys, such as an independent judiciary. There are many more brutal regimes even than the South African Government, who have inflicted so much death and destruction upon so many of their own citizens in recent weeks.

There are, however, aspects which single out South Africa for the attention of the House. Some of them were mentioned by the hon. Member for Cambridge, such as the long and traditional links, the personal and family links, which exist between this country and South Africa. There are the economic links between the two countries. Above all there is the nature of the regime which South Africa tries to operate and the extraordinary way in which that policy is defended on the pretence that it has something to do with Western values and interests. Fundamental to the regime in South Africa is the division of men and women on the basis of their race and the denial of political power on the basis of race. That is the one thing a man cannot change. He cannot pretend, as he can in a one-party state, to conform to the ideology of the party so that he can at least work his way into the political system and fight for change from within. He cannot claim to shift his allegiance to whichever side he needs to belong to in some repressive countries in order to gain political standing and power. There is no way in which a man can pretend away his racial origin, and it is that which categorises him in the South African system.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: No, I wish to develop my arguments. The South African regime operates that system of racial discrimination and racial denial of power, while at the same time pretending that it is in some way defending Western values, and it consistently seeks to regard itself as part of the West, as a friend of the Western democracies. By doing so it invites a degree of attention to its appalling abuses of human rights which it then finds surprising. South Africa should not be surprised to find that if it seeks to act or speak in our name it earns our criticism.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I want to develop my argument, but I shall give way to hon. Members later.

Any black South African and any white progressive South African who wants to see a change in that system, a change which virtually everybody in this House professes he wishes to see, has, over the years, faced three options. One is the option of the exercise of violence, which is a frightening option to undertake; the second is the option of hoping that external pressure including economic sanctions, will force the pace of change; and the third is the option of waiting and hoping that things will get better. Many people in South Africa exercised the third option—they waited and hoped. That option has now run out and the number of people prepared simply to wait and hope is now tiny. That option is no longer available to us.

There have always been powerful reasons to be sceptical about the effectiveness of economic sanctions, particularly if they are not accepted and enforced by the whole community of nations, or virtually the whole community of nations. That is why I was sympathetic to the attempt at the Nassau conference to reach agreement, to arrive at a consensus, supported by all states. It was worth the hours of late night negotiations to try to obtain, as indeed was obtained at the end of the day, a package which, whatever its limitations, was an agreed package supported by all the states that took part.

Sanctions which might satisfy the conscience of an individual or of an individual country, which may be more far-reaching, are far less effective than sanctions which are agreed collectively by the community of nations. Our experience in this field should teach us that, but our wider scepticism—I shared in it, as many others have done—about the value of economic sanctions, has been changed by what has happened in recent months in South Africa. There has appeared in the South African economy and in the South African political system a degree of vulnerability far greater than we have seen for many years, and far more likely to be responsive to economic sanctions over a shorter period.

If that had not happened, our discussion of economic sanctions, which I should still none the less have supported, would have been about a long period of

[Mr. Beith]

probably rather ineffective measures which for much of the time would have done more for our own conscience than to change what was going on in South Africa. That situation has changed drastically. It has changed because of sanctions dictated primarily by commercial considerations. It has changed because of sanctions exercised by banks and international commercial organisations making a judgment about what would happen in South Africa. That was a judgment about the politics of South Africa and about race relations and violence, but it was essentially a commercial judgment, and it has had a powerful effect, not least upon the South African business community. That effect must be sustained, and measures by Governments can help to sustain it.

It is just conceivable that the South African Government might be able to persuade some of those who have made a commercial judgment to impose sanctions on South Africa to do otherwise. It is just conceivable that the South African Government, by tightening the screw of repression, and by involving the military as well as the police increasingly in holding down violence, might manage to convince, I think wrongly, a few of those involved in international commerce that they can hold the lid on it to such an extent that the commercial pressure for sanctions might relax for a while. In those circumstances, it is important that Governments move in and make it clear that the pressure is both commercial and political. Both elements have to be sustained in order to keep up that pressure which has already begun to have a powerful effect within South Africa.

The South African Government believe that they still have a card to play. They believe that they have a friend in the British Prime Minister and the British Government and they are presented day after day with evidence for that. If that were not so, if they did not have some justification for that belief, the picture would have been different. The Government should have gone to Nassau with specific proposals reflecting perhaps the Government's scepticism about comprehensive sanctions, but with specific proposals for measures which would have an immediate effect. We should have been taking the lead at that conference in advocating those measures, and we should have been seeking more than that.

We should also have sought to gather together the Commonwealth leaders to work out measures to assist the front-line states, because that is a burden which the Commonwealth needs to share. With or without sanctions, the states that border upon South Africa will face increasing difficulty in the coming months and years. That is a responsibility which Britain cannot shoulder alone. Other Commonwealth nations ought to share in it, and are ready to do so. If we had gone to Nassau with a package of proposals combining measures which could be effective in the short term, together with measures to help the front-line states, we would have found ready backing and a ready audience of Commonwealth leaders. That was not so.

However, let us accept at face value what the Foreign Secretary said. Let us accept for the purposes of this discussion that at least the outcome of all these exchanges and late night discussions, and all the pressure put on our own Prime Minister, was in the Government's view, a worthwhile package of measures. The outcome was worth while. It was a step forward, in that all the states in the Commonwealth agreed upon this package. But what happened then? The Prime Minister came home and gave radio and television interviews in which she said that the movement she had made was "absolutely minute". What could have been more dismissive or more insulting to those with whom she was engaged in this task?

At least when President Reagan was forced by Congress to accept economic measures and economic sanctions against South Africa he had the wit to pretend it was his idea in the first place. Indeed, he went about claiming that the Administration had not changed its policy but had simply embraced this new development in policy. We all laughed a little at the time, but at least he saw that if the measure was to be worth while he had to embrace it and give it his support, whatever his initial reluctance.

The Prime Minister did the precise opposite. She is haunted by the fear of a U-turn. She is haunted by her experiences in past battles with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). She is still trying to prove she is not like him. I wish that she would not do that. The right hon. Gentleman has many commendable features, one of which is the ability to see when he is wrong and change his mind. I do not see why the Prime Minister should be so determined to prove that she is unlike the right hon. Gentleman. Even if she is, frankly, it is a secondary consideration when compared to the need to build Commonwealth unity on an issue such as this.

If these measures are to be interpreted as the Prime Minister herself wishes to interpret them, as a signal to South Africa, the right hon. Lady has totally destroyed the signal. What sort of signal was it to say, "We have agreed on a package of measures, but for Britain the movement we have made is absolutely minute."? The significance is destroyed completely. That was no kind of statesmanship. It was seriously damaging to the Commonwealth. By the actions of the right hon. Lady, Britain is throwing away any pretence to leadership in the Commonwealth. Indeed, leadership has been handed to some notable figures who took part in those discussions. What happened was damaging to long-term British interests. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, it will cost British jobs in the long term as more and more Commonwealth countries which have been friendly to us and closely associated with us despair of the attitude that we have taken.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman has taken up the point made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who made a threat to the Prime Minister that if she did not concede to the demands of the rest of the Commonwealth, jobs would be lost in this country through lost orders from Commonwealth countries because of our so-called isolated position. The hon. Gentleman obviously endorses that view. Can he spell out to the House which jobs would be lost, which countries would stop trading with us, and whether the trade that they do with us is to the benefit of this country? In many cases, they build up nothing more than debt in the trade that we do with them.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman would have difficulty in convincing my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) that the manufacture of helicopters is anything other than beneficial to our economy, and that is one of many industries in which we seek contracts with Commonwealth countries. To isolate Britain would be

severely damaging to long-term interests in the Commonwealth and in much of the rest of the world. If the hon. Gentleman cannot see that, he is being very shortsighted. The Prime Minister was characteristically shortsighted when she isolated Britain to such an extent.

This is probably the last opportunity that this Prime Minister will have to bring about change in South Africa; it will be her last opportunity to play some part in it. More than that, I fear that it may be the last time that any of us will have an opportunity to help to bring about peaceful change in South Africa. The option of waiting and hoping is gone. Violence is mounting. It ought to be common ground to most of us that there comes a stage when limited concessions of the kind which might mark the progress which the Foreign Secretary hopes to see within six months will do nothing to alleviate the increase in violence. Once the cycle of violence begins, only the ultimate grant of full political rights can bring it to an end. Even that might not do so. If South Africa is launched into violence and internal conflict, of the prospect for a peaceful democratic South Africa in the future is threatened. The time is now, but this Government manifestly lack any sense of timing.

5.12 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I regret that Opposition Members are so often reluctant to acknowledge the common ground that exists between us on this subject. Historically the ideals and aspirations of Afrikanerdom are tainted with Fascism. In practice, the implementation of Afrikanerdom stinks with Fascism. It is unacceptable. That realisation should provide common ground in our debate. I hope that Opposition Members will one day acknowledge that this side of the House matches in rhetoric and sincerity its dislike and hatred of apartheid.

The last time the House debated South African affairs was on 24 July when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey)—I regret that he is not in his seat—posed a question:

"Is there anything which we can do which may slow down or divert this accelerating race to catastrophe in South Africa . . ."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1166.]

It would be wise to bear that question in mind. Is there indeed anything that from this distance, in the light of our global influence, we can do to influence the course of events in South Africa? I do not claim to have the knowledge or experience of South Africa of many of my hon. Friends or of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East but I believe that in July, just as earlier this afternoon, the right hon. Gentleman posed the right question but gave the wrong answer.

The question demands this reasoning. To know what we ought to do first demands knowing what we wish to achieve. Time and again the Government have reiterated that they seek a two fold policy towards South Africa: to seek the overthrow of apartheid and in its place to seek the creation of a form of government acceptable to all races in South Africa. It is not for us to specify what the form of government should be. To do so would be to demand of South Africa what does not exist elsewhere in the African continent where tribalism and persecution of ethnic minorities are the stuff of everyday.

Government policy also avoids the sham and the mockery of supporting the "one man, one vote" cry, to which Nelson Madela pays lip service, which is prostituted throughout the rest of the African continent. The end of apartheid and the creation of a form of government acceptable to all should be our objective, and I welcome the fact that it is the objective of the Government.

To return to the question posed by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, is there indeed anything we can do to slow down or divert the accelerating race to catastrophe?

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I am trying to follow my hon. Friend's logic. In using the phrase "acceptable to all" does he draw any parallel between the great difficulties we experience in developing a system of government acceptable to all in Northern Ireland or in Ireland as a whole and his assumption that somehow a system of government acceptable to all can be found in South Africa? Does that give him cause for thought or for concern?

Mr. Hunter: One must beware of making absolutes. Forms of government are developed round the world according to the social needs and the historical trends and tendencies of different societies. There are no absolutes anywhere.

To return to the question posed by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, there is both a positive and negative answer. Negatively we should do nothing which will promote and encourage unrest and disorder in South Africa. That is precisely what the imposition of sanctions and a strategy of disinvestment would achieve. The arguments have been heard in the House before and are well known to hon. Members.

If Opposition Members believe that unemployment causes unrest—I suspect they will be arguing that in a later debate—they must acknowledge that it is true of South Africa just as they will argue that it is true of this country. Disinvestment of 20 per cent. in South Africa would result, I am told, in the loss of approximately 90,000 jobs currently held by white people and 350,000 jobs held by black people. Those who would suffer first and most would be those whom we claim we wish to help. There is evidence that the very first to suffer would be the 1 million black foreign workers in South Africa. Nor should we forget the neighbouring black African countries whose economies depend so much on close economic ties with a prosperous South Africa.

For good or bad, we must not forget either that disinvestment and sanctions threaten some 200,000 jobs in this country. If Opposition Members wish to impose sanctions against South Africa, let them have the courage to go back to their constituencies and point out that the implementation of that policy would result in the loss of the best part of a quarter of a million jobs in this country.

Of paramount importance, economic sanctions imposed against South Africa would create further unrest, disorder and violence, and there is enough of that at the moment. Sanctions should not be imposed if we wish to slow down or divert the accelerating race to catastrophe.

Changes are taking place in South Africa. We see this in the labour laws, the marriage laws, the pass laws and the conducting and practising of sports. Above all, there have been constitutional changes. Changes have come. It is true that they have come slowly, but they are happening —they are not cosmetic, but nor do they go to the heart of the matter. However it is important to acknowledge that, apart from the absolute Afrikaner diehards within the laager of their ox carts, the overwhelming majority of all

[Mr. Hunter]

races, not least whites, in South Africa want change and they want it quickly. The forces of evolution, as opposed to revolution, in South Africa will respond to outside encouragement, but they will not respond to outside pressure. To encourage revolution is to encourage anarchy, barbarity and murder. I am not prepared to do that.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is the hon. Member seriously suggesting that these changes have come about irrespective of any outside pressure?

Mr. Hunter: The changes have come from an awareness among white South Africans that the position inherited from the early 1960s was morally and economically untenable. It is impossible to analyse what led people to change their minds. There has been a programme of change in South Africa for at least 10 years.

I welcome and applaud the agreement reached a few days ago by the Commonwealth leaders. The Prime Minister gave a little ground but the sanctions package lacks the teeth to do real harm to the South African economy. I applaud that. The seriousness of intent and concern behind the package cannot be doubted. It will encourage change rather than deter change and promote chaos.

My hon. Friends can speak for themselves. For my part, I hate apartheid. On 10 July, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) declared:

"We want to rid South Africa of 20th century slavery". —[*Official Report*, 10 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 1093.]

So do we—but slavery takes many forms. The slavery of any racial or tribal group is equally unacceptable. In Africa, slavery all too often takes the form of persecution of an ethnic minority by an ethnic majority. The stakes are too high in South Africa to back revolution. That is why our policy should seek to accelerate evolution rather than encourage revolution. The forces of evolution are represented by many people of many racial groups in South Africa. They need friends, not enemies. Rather than apologise for it, I am proud to declare myself one of their friends.

5.23 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): When discussing apartheid, we are discussing not simply a person's rights, but a system that aims to devalue the dignity of man. It aims to defame humanity and to attack, as did the anti-Semitism of the 1930s, the spirit and dignity of man himself. Time is no longer on our side, and we are slipping towards a holocaust. What worries me is that, 40 years ago, another British Prime Minister came back waving a scrap of paper as a diplomatic victory and said that if we talked and talked everything would be all right. The situation is now beyond leaving it to talk alone.

It is quite true that members of the Commonwealth went along with the Prime Minister. The right hon. Lady certainly prefers to think that they went along with her. Britain is no longer the leader of the Commonwealth, and it is clear that this Commonwealth agreement was the last attempt to make Britain an equal partner in an association of equals. Britain needs the Commonwealth far more than the Commonwealth needs Britain. It asked our help because it recognised that, when a Labour Government imposed sanctions on Rhodesia, Ian Smith could avoid them because he had a sympathetic industrial and political base in Britain that would undermine the Government's intentions. Only when it was made clear that Britain as a whole recognised that the situation to which Ian Smith was dragging us would involve the interests of Britain and the rest of the world did we achieve what should have happened years before—representation of the people in Zimbabwe.

We are members of the Commonwealth. Of course sanctions will cost jobs — here and in South Africa. There is a great deal of difference, however, between enduring unemployment for a principle in South Africa and enduring it here because of an unacceptable political dogma.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Young: No.

We must distinguish between the two. When we went to war over the Falklands—a decision that ran contrary to all my beliefs—the Government argued that no cost was too much for a principle. Do they now recognise that the abolition of apartheid is a principle? It is not simply a system of government. It draws a distinction between one man and another simply because of the colour of his skin. It runs counter to my political convictions and counter to my Christian principles.

We are asking the Government to recognise that Britain is perhaps as much on trial as South Africa. We are in no position to lead the Commonwealth, but we must decide whether we stand by the principles which the House, the country and our society have valued or whether we stand back, excuse and dodge until the holocaust comes. What I suggest will cost us all, but what economic value do we put on one of the 800 lives that have already been destroyed in South Africa? Do we value humanity? Are we prepared to say that there are certain principles which the House and the British people reject? It is on that basis that we must decide our actions, and approach the present situation.

5.30 pm

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): By his caring and thoughtful speech my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) has shown that to be in favour of peaceful change in South Africa and of a system which does not impose widespread sanctions — an approach that is the result of greater experience of the real situation in South Africa than many hon. Members have —does not make one an apologist for apartheid.

I bitterly resent the accusations that are levelled against anybody who dares to stand up and speak in favour of some of the good things that are happening in South Africa —and good things are happening there. Also, I bitterly resent, as a constituent said to me only last weekend, being lectured upon human rights by those who purport to support human rights. Their names have been mentioned this afternoon. They are said to be the people to whom this Government must turn if an agreement is to be reached in six months' time. Where were the protests from the Opposition and from other people who are ready to use South Africa as the whipping boy for all the world's problems when 10 dissidents were executed in Zimbabwe? We heard not a murmur.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Does my hon. Friend agree that if sanctions have to be discussed

today, the House should be discussing sanctions against black African countries whose anti-democratic and anti-human rights records lead South Africa almost to look down on them? The whole of black Africa is full of such examples. To discuss the imposition of sanctions only against South Africa is hypocritical.

Mr. Thornton: My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that our attitude towards the abandonment of human rights by other countries must not be selective. Nor must our condemnation of violence be selective. We must not condone violence in South Africa because it is directed against apartheid, which we abhor. We also abhor other forms of violence. We cannot give political respectability to violence. To do so would be to condone what is happening in many parts of this country. I do not believe that we should.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge referred to the respect held in South Africa for the views of people in this country. He referred eloquently to the changes that have taken place. Human rights need progressively to be improved in South Africa so that stability can be achieved, and people must play a full part in achieving that stability. The stick followed by the stick and by yet more stick is not the way to bring about stability. The changes that are taking place must be the result of an acceptance and a growing belief among South Africans of all races that change must come about. Acceptance is being accelerated by the displeasure that is being shown by many countries. My hon. Friend said that it is impossible to quantify how much effect that displeasure will have, but its effect is undeniable. There have been major and significant changes. Many elements of both grand and petty apartheid are disappearing from South Africa.

We must ask ourselves whether we want this country to use its influence to accelerate the rate of change to an unacceptable level. Do we want the process of political change, which depends on the art of the possible, to result in a backlash, which will mean that the President of South Africa is unable to pursue reform?

Reference has been made this afternoon to the hard line Afrikaners. There is an organisation called the Broederbond. A member of that organisation could hardly be thought, by those who believe that Afrikanerdom is wholly committed to the maintenance of apartheid, to have participated in what I consider to be a major reform document that was published in 1980. In 1980 Professor de Lange produced a report on education. I had the privilege of talking to him at Witwatersrand university about its implications, which were staggering for white South Africans. It involved a massive shift of resources away from white education into black and coloured education. These are the people who represent moderate, sensible, reforming opinion in South Africa. We must encourage them and not slap them down at every step of the way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge referred to the historical perspective. It is important to keep it in our minds and not to ask for a pace of change in South Africa which cannot be achieved. If we try to cram everything into too tight a time frame, there will be an explosion. An explosion in South Africa is not in the interests of the blacks, the coloureds, the Asians or the whites, and it is not in the interests of those who believe that southern Africa needs stability. A reformed South Africa, which is prepared to move in the direction of change, could play a fundamental role in achieving stability.

5.39 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Several Conservative Members have referred to the difficulties facing South Africa and suggested that if certain action is taken the country will slip into disorder and chaos and there will be loss of life. They do not seem to realise what is happening in South Africa. If they do not realise that the Nassau crisis was the result of agitation about what is happening in South Africa, they understand nothing at all.

I have very mixed feelings about the Nassau agreement. I want to believe that the Nassau accord means that there will be progress. I want to believe that the Prime Minister has conceded ground, that the Government are serious about trying to get rid of apartheid and that the dialogue with South Africa will succeed. Yet experience teaches me that it will not.

It was in 1977 that we set up the Contact Group of five Western nations that were supposed to conduct negotiations with South Africa to bring Namibia to independence. We are now much further from achieving that independence that we were in 1977. It is clear that the South African Government have established this new multi-party or puppet Government in an attempt to bypass negotiations and freedom for Namibia.

I have mixed feelings because the Government have apparently given their wholehearted consent to some of the matters that I and many others have advocated for many years. I have been to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office several times to demand certain action—stopping the sale of krugerrands, withdrawing our military attaché in South Africa, sending back its military attaché here, and ending new investment. All those requests have been firmly refused by the Minister of State. Therefore, I can do nothing but welcome some of the proposals.

This is the second time in the past 12 months—possibly the past six months—that the Government have shifted their ground. The Prime Minister and the Minister of State said that they would not accept the EEC package of measures against South Africa, but they did accept it.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The hon. Gentleman must get his facts right. When the EEC package was being considered I, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, said that at that moment we could not indicate our acceptance because we wished to give consideration to the implications of that package. We gave the package consideration and, in a very short period, we accepted it.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister has confirmed exactly what I said. He said the Government could not at that time implement those measures but, after consideration, they decided to apply them. When the Prime Minister went to Nassau, she said much the same thing. She was not going to implement sanctions against South Africa; now she is applying not sanctions, but signals. One man's sanctions are another man's signals. The effect is intended to be the same. The truth is that the principle of sanctions, pressure, leverage or signals has been conceded.

We have heard the argument against sanctions from both the Foreign Secretary and others on the Government Benches. One of the points of the argument has been that

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if we impose sanctions they will hurt most the black Africans. The British Government's position is exposed on the front page of the *Anti-Apartheid News*. There is a picture of the British Prime Minister facing P. W. Botha. The Prime Minister is saying, "We are opposed to sanctions because they will hurt most the people we want to help." P. W. Botha replies, "Thanks." Many of us believe that the Government are much more concerned about protecting British investments than about the eradication of apartheid.

Another aspect of the Government's argument is that sanctions are ineffective. Central to that theme is that the use of sanctions on Rhodesia was a failure. I concede that the sanctions on Rhodesia were not as effective as I should have liked because of the situation in South Africa, because of Portugal, Angola and Mozambique and because some senior members of the then Labour Government were not keen enthusiasts of sanctions. I accept that, but if we had not had sanctions on Rhodesia, the Lancaster House settlement would have taken place at a much later date. If we had given diplomatic recognition to the Smith UDI, if it had free access to world banking, to arms and to communications, there is no doubt that the liberation war in Rhodesia would have gone on for much longer and many lives would have been lost.

The Minister of State and I have had discussions on several occasions, and he has partly conceded my case about sanctions having some effect while he still denies the role that they have played. He also says that I know perfectly well that the real reason for Lancaster House was the activity of the liberation movement—the liberation armies of ZIPRA and ZANLA. I agree with him. The liberation struggle brought about independence for Zimbabwe. When the hon. Gentleman accepts the role of the liberation movement, the cynicism and the hypocrisy of the Government's case is exposed. They are saying to black South Africans that we shall not help them to achieve liberation by applying sanctions, but at the same time we are denying them the only alternative method to sanctions — the right to fight for their freedom. That is condemned as violence.

It is in no one's interests to have a full-scale civil war in South Africa. The African National Congress makes that point. It does not want to inherit South Africa with its economy destroyed or with the machinery scrapped because of the civil war. Those people want to inherit a situation in which they can advocate the political system that they want and a truly multiracial society. If we stand back now, not for the first time, and say that we shall not come to the assistance of black South Africans, of Indian South Africans, of coloured South Africans and of white South Africans too—because they are all involved—the end that they fear, chaos, destruction and loss of life on an even more massive scale than now will come into being.

We must seriously ask the Government what they want. Did the Government mean what they said when they signed the Nassau agreement? It is difficult to take the Government's word for their assent to the major part of the Nassau agreement because the Prime Minister poured scorn on it. "Minute little changes," "very little concessions," she said. She poured so much scorn on it that she denigrated her own word. One should not be surprised at that. I do not believe that the Prime Minister or many hon. Members understand the qualitative change in psychology and opinion that has taken place in South Africa. The change has come about partly by economic circumstances. We know the South African economy is in very serious trouble. It has come about mainly because people have seen, perhaps for the first time in their lives, the sustained ferocity of the police and of the army in the past 12 months against the majority of the population.

I have spoken to people, who do not share my point of view on South Africa, who say that they had a feeling of revulsion when they saw on their television screens the South African railway truck with crates on it driving through a township and suddenly soldiers come out of it shooting indiscriminately. That has caused much revulsion, not only outside South Africa but inside the country, although people in South Africa have not seen on their television screens the full impact of what has happened.

That change has come about also because the South African Government have shown that they cannot tolerate any democratic freedom of expression. The trial has now started of the United Democratic Front leaders who are charged with treason because they dared to advocate that apartheid was wrong. They dared to advocate that the tri-cameral system was a disgrace.

The qualitative change is so great that even I found it difficult to believe. I listened to about six different radio broadcasts before I could believe what my ears were hearing—that white South African business men had asked to meet the African National Congress in Zambia. They not only asked to go, but they went, and they returned with a high opinion of the leaders of the ANC. I am glad that happened. The leader of the Progressive Federal Party, Mr. van Slabbert, and others have been to see the ANC. He also recognised that there can be no future discussion or negotiation of any sort about the future of South Africa unless the ANC is brought into the dialogue.

Afrikaner students wanted to see the youth wing of the ANC, but they were prevented from doing so because the South African Government withdrew their passports. There are many other organisations—I do not wish to give away any secrets because many of them do not want it known in case they are stopped from going—within South Africa and business interests in the City that want to discuss the future with the ANC. Only the British Government stand aside and say that they are not prepared to meet the ANC.

Why will the Government not meet the ANC? Why will the Prime Minister not do as she did with Bishop Tutu and invite Oliver Tambo to 10 Downing street?

Mr. John Carlisle: They are terrorists.

Mr. Hughes: I hear the answer from the Conservative Benches. Sometimes the Foreign Secretary calls Oliver Tambo's organisation terrorists and says that the ANC must renounce violence. It is strange, because we are told that we must not be selective, but the Government have had face-to-face talks with SWAPO of Namibia. I do not class that as a terrorist organisation, but it has not renounced violence. The Government are prepared to meet it. Although perhaps not in the same league in terms of personality and stature, nevertheless, the Government have been prepared to have discussions with Jonas Savimbi of UNITA. I would say that he carries out a

terrorist campaign, although others might regard it differently. Jonas Savimbi has set out, with the help of South Africa, to bring down the legitimate Government of Angola. Yet the Government are prepared to have discussions with him. If the Government have any sense and wish to show that they are a force in negotiations and determining the future, the first thing they should do is to invite Oliver Tambo and others to 10 Downing street.

The South African Government have open access to the British Government in all sorts of ways. The South African Government will not renounce violence against their people. The British Government will do nothing to compel change. By their failure to act decisively, the British Government have placed themselves firmly on the side of P. W. Botha. They must take their share of the responsibility for the blood that has been shed.

I seldom quarrel with my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart), but I quarrel with her when she says that she was disappointed by the Foreign Secretary's speech. I was disappointed at its contents, but, frankly, it lived up to my expectations because it failed to measure up to the serious position that we are in.

What the Foreign Secretary said at the end was significant. He made it clear that if the mission to South Africa fails, and in the next six months there are no significant changes, no acceleration in the progress of reform and no moves towards dialogue, the Government intend to thwart any further initiative within the Commonwealth and stop any meaningful economic sanctions.

By their failure to respond to the serious problem and their failure to defend freedom and to realise that someone must stand up and speak out for those who are being killed daily, the Government have shown themselves to be an affront to human decency—and they should resign.

5.54 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I have had the privilege of addressing the House on this subject several times and I shall therefore keep my comments brief and related to the Nassau agreement in which the House is interested.

I am delighted that the amendment has been selected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that it makes no mention of sanctions. That encourages me to vote for the Government tonight.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was in a virtual "no-win" position when she went to Nassau. The Opposition would criticise her for whatever stance she took. However isolated she was, she stood up for a principle that she has demonstrated in the House and outside many times. She understood the fears of many Conservative Members, and that if more sanctions were imposed she would lose the support and encouragement of many of her Back Benchers.

What the Prime Minister said has been generally criticised throughout Africa. Only this morning, we heard Mrs. Winnie Mandela the self-appointed spokesman for the so-called black majority in South Africa, criticising the Prime Minister and calling her a racist. Those were disgraceful remarks, and they do not do Mrs. Mandela's case any good on the international scene.

The Prime Minister stuck to her assessment of how to keep the Commonwealth together and achieved a concordat with which—let no one forget—everyone agreed. Many of us question the wisdom of Commonwealth conferences having to reach a unanimous conclusion. Why did she not choose on this occasion to put in a minority report? Most of us agree with the package with which she has returned. I agree with the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, reinforced by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), that we must give political dialogue an opportunity to work. We should have no truck with any sanctions that might be imposed after the six-month time limit.

I must express my misgivings about the fact that we seem to have got on this "escalator", as *The Times* put it, of sanctions, by having submitted to a form of blackmail from other Commonwealth countries to reach agreement. We are on a slippery slope of further sanctions being demanded of the Government. If that were the case, the Government would lose the support of many members of the party and of many of their Back Benchers.

The tragedy of the Commonwealth conference was that 46 countries, represented by their Heads of Government —a unique occasion— saw fit to spend their time criticising a country over which they have little control and in which many of them have little interest.

With all the problems that the Commonwealth faces —economic, social, crime and financial—it is a tragedy that the leaders spent all their time in those rather luxurious surroundings criticising the South African Government and trying to bring about some change there by the imposition of sanctions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) said on a point of order, who are we to criticise another Government and the internal affairs of that country? We may express an opinion, but that conference provided a unique opportunity to discuss the various problems that Commonwealth countries face. All we have achieved is an addendum to the main business of the conference about the awful problem of drugs. Most of the Commonwealth leaders should be ashamed of that.

I should like to take up three small aspects of the concordat. The communiqué refers continually to the explosive situation and the violent conflict going on in South Africa. No one denies that there are serious and dangerous problems in some areas of South Africa, but it would not be right to assume that the country is in flames, that the people are rioting or that those who are causing the problems have the massive support of the majority. It has already been explained, although only in part and grudgingly by Opposition Members, that some of the trouble has been caused by blacks turning on blacks. Some of the most horrific crimes, including assassination, have been inter-tribal. South Africa is not in flames. I believe the position to be slightly better now than it was.

We do not minimise our abhorrence and condemnation of the violence, but it is unfortunate that the communiqué is couched in terms of violent conflict and explosive confrontation. That is not the case in South Africa. Apart from trying to protect the minority view, the security forces have taken measures that any Government would have to take against those who break the law.

My second point arising from the communiqué relates to the seven wise men—or eminent people as they have been referred to— who have been chosen to oversee progress during the next six months. I should like to ask the Minister how those seven members were chosen. If they are necessary at least our country will be represented.

[Mr. John Carlisle]

It seems somewhat ironic that the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe is one of those who will observe the democratic changes taking place in South Africa. Mention has been made of the Lancaster house agreement and many hon. Members are familiar with the position in Zimbabwe. I fail to see how Mr. Robert Mugabe can make any judgment on the democracy of his next-door neighbour when he has committed his country to a one-party state at the earliest opportunity. What force will those seven members have? If they ask the South African Government whether they can visit the country, which I sincerely hope that they do, will they go with an open mind?

The third aspect of the communiqué that worries me is the reference to adequate progress within six months. However, it does not spell out what that progress might be. That is the dilemma and the heart of the question. In our anxiety to move towards equal representation and equal francise we must ask exactly what we mean by progress. The measures that have been taken by the South African Government may seem small to us, but they are massive to them. There are measures in the pipeline and measures to which they are committed. I fail to understand how we in Britain and the seven eminent politicians can judge the rate of progress. It is dangerous to specify a length of time in the communiqué.

Of course we are impatient for change, but we must consider changes in an African context and on the basis that democracy takes a long time to work out. If the Opposition's desire for one man, one vote were followed tomorrow, no form of democracy would exist in South Africa.

If P. W. Botha wanted to please the rest of the world and move towards a democratic system, it would be easy for him to declare one man, one vote tomorrow. His Parliament might agree to the measure if he went along the same lines as other African countries such as Kenya, Malawi, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia and declared that there would be no opposition parties at the forthcoming election. Prime Minister Botha could go down that road easily and the howls of protest from the Opposition would be justified in such a case. South Africa is moving towards an attempt to work out equal franchise for all its citizens, but experience of Africa has taught them, and should teach us, that to go down that road as far as some people would advocate could lead to disaster.

In conclusion, I should like to express my agreement with the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), who spoke so well and so sensibly on the matter. Even the Opposition grudgingly accept that full economic sanctions or even part economic sanctions would bring economic disaster to South Africa. We cannot expect reform and change under those economic conditions. It was the same in the America of the 1930s when the negro tried to establish political rights that he did not enjoy at that time. At times of economic disaster the negro made little progress. After the war, when the economic prosperity of America began to advance, change and equal franchise were achieved.

Under prosperous conditions there is some hope of reform. We should encourage that reform and encouragement will come from the South African Government. There is a danger, now that the gun is held at South Africa's head and sticks are used rather than carrots, that the South African Government will react by saying, "A plague on all your houses," and will want to sort out their problems in their own way. One cannot blame them. That reaction would be a tragedy for the world and South Africa. That is why I welcome the amendment and the small steps taken towards encouraging peaceful dialogue between our two countries.

6.5 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) is the foremost apologist for the South African regime. Time and again the hon. Member expresses a point of view which is basically that of the South African authorities. But, in his favour at least, the hon. Gentleman's speeches articulate the feelings of many Conservative Back-Bench Members who are perhaps more reluctant to speak out. Their views are clearly expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Luton, North, asked why we should interfere in the internal affairs of an independent country. Indeed, that was the subject of a point of order today before the debate began. It is interesting to note the remarks of a former Tory Member for Bristol, West from 1928 onwards in a debate in 1938 following the Munich settlement. Referring to Labour Members, he said:

> "They do not like the form of Government which the German people are today enjoying . . . At any rate, it is not for hon. Gentlemen opposite to discuss the domestic affairs of Germany." —[*Official Report*, 3 October 1938; Vol. 339, c. 108.]

The attitude of fellow travelling with Right-wing dictatorship and of finding reasons why we should not protest against pre-war Fascism or the tyranny now in South Africa comes as no surprise to Labour Members. Nor should we be surprised at events in South Africa during the past four or five months, which have been the inevitable result of policies pursued by a Government determined to deny the majority of their people their political human rights. The hon. Member for Luton, North made what I believe to be an incorrect historical reference to the position of blacks in America. We all know of the problems that existed there, but we are discussing a country where a large majority of people are denied their basic human rights.

The Government try to find excuses and claim that there have been some changes. I make two points about that. First, change in South Africa has come about only as a result of maximum pressure from outside that country. No one believes that the South African authorities would have moved towards even those small changes without intense pressure.

My second point was well summed up in the "Panorama" programme on South Africa on Monday. A black South African said that the changes that have come about did not give him the right to vote or the right to be represented in the Government of his country. The changes that have taken place in South Africa do not satisfy those people. It is mischief-making — I will repeat this outside the House if need be—to compare the position in South Africa with the position in this country. There is no possible comparison, because, whatever the difficulties facing a number of people in Britain, which will be the subject of the following debate, the majority of people in South Africa are denied their political and human rights. Moreover, the legislation in South Africa is determined to enshrine, not to overcome, racist discrimination.

During the past 20 years the South African regime has become increasingly isolated. Conservative Members say that South Africa is not the only country in which human rights are denied. Who has ever suggested otherwise? It is not part of our argument that there is not injustice in other countries, including in parts of Africa, or that only South Africa denies human rights. We say, however, that South Africa is the only country that discriminates for one reason—the colour of a person's skin.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that discrimination occurs in many African regimes where one-party states are based on tribe and political rights are denied to people on the basis of tribe? Does the hon. Gentleman claim that the position in South Africa differs substantially from that?

Mr. Winnick: There is no comparison between the point that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make and what is happening in South Africa. One of the unfortunate aspects of this debate is that Conservative Members do not recognise what is recognised by the Opposition, the majority of the British people and the world community at large. People understandably compare South Africa with Nazi Germany, for reasons that must be obvious.

Because of the isolation of South Africa it is sad that Conservative Governments—previous Governments and, even more so, the present Administration—seem to take the side of the South African authorities. At the Commonwealth conference and on previous occasions the Prime Minister has been seen as a person who wants to stop effective action being taken against the South African regime. It is understandable that Britain is isolated in this matter.

It was perhaps right that the other Heads of Government at the Commonwealth conference concluded that, in order to get the approval of the British Prime Minister, a limited agreement should be reached. I should, of course, have liked more effective action to be taken, but perhaps in all the circumstances it was better to bring the British Government in rather than to take action without British agreement.

What will happen after six months? The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has told us, in effect, that, no matter what the circumstances may be, the British Government will not accept sanctions. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was echoing the views of the Prime Minister. He wants to deny the African National Congress the right to fight for freedom. It is understandable, in a country where there is no constitutional road to progress, that force has been used by the ANC, which came into being in 1911 or 1912, although it said for years that it did not want to be involved in violence. It was only after the events of 1960 that the ANC concluded that there was no alternative. I do not apologise for saying that, though I do not like violnce any more than anyone else. I am not, however, a pacifist. I believe that people who are denied human and political rights are entitled to fight for their freedom. I would be the first to defend the ANC for concluding that there was no other way to go. But who are we to sit in judgment?

The world community and the British Government should be placing maximum pressure on the South African authorities. The South African Government are faced with many problems, not the least of which are debt difficulties. The International Monetary Fund and British and American bankers should make it extremely difficult for South Africans to get out of their present economic difficulties. That is the least that should be done in these circumstances.

The most effective measures possible should be taken to ensure that progess occurs in South Africa. The Prime Minister says that sanctions will cause unemployment in South Africa, but it is difficult to imagine her weeping over what will happen there. She has shown little concern for the majority in South Africa during her political career. She has been reluctant to take measures against the regime. If the South African people and their representative organisations decide that added hardship, because of sanctions, is necessary, I do not believe that we have any right to say that sanctions should not be imposed because they may create unemployment or further difficulties. The black Africans and the coloured community recognise that hardship will occur. We must realise what is already happening in South Africa to understand why they favour sanctions.

There are many complex issues in this world. I do not believe that South Africa is one. Like slavery and pre-war Fascism, so with apartheid. At the end of the day there is a relatively simple issue: are we for, or against, apartheid? The Conservatives say that they are against apartheid, but it is not enough to say that. We must decide what action will be taken by the British Government to undermine apartheid, destroy this evil and allow South Africa to have a system in which discrimination is a thing of the past. The British Government pay only lip service to opposition to apartheid. Last year the Prime Minister wined and dined the South African President. Like my colleagues, I believe that it is now necessary to apply far stricter measures and to impose economic sanctions. Above all, it is necessary that Britain should no longer be isolated from the world community over this important issue.

6.16 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow East): It is wrong for the Opposition to question the sincerity of Conservative Members about their detestation of apartheid when we are genuinely concerned about the best way of achieving rapid political progress in South Africa. That questioning is immoral because it gives out false signals. When the word "signals" was mentioned earlier I thought of the false signals that would arise from the posturing that does nothing to provide the just solution that the black majority in South Africa deserve. The poorest and most oppressed members of the black majority community say, "We have suffered so much already that we are prepared to suffer more. We favour further sanctions." However, the blacks who still have jobs say, "Don't do that, because jobs will suffer." It is easy to say that only one conclusion can be drawn, but the matter is much more complex.

Following the exhortations of my colleagues who claim to know something about South Africa, I recently visited South Africa for the first time. I may have been slightly too pragmatic. I went there wondering what all the fuss was about. I thought, "Of course apartheid must be wrong, but what is all the fuss about?" I returned from that awful country profoundly depressed and utterly aghast at a totally monstrous system of politics which I believe must be swept away as quickly as possible.

In so far as the international community has a role to play—at the margin only—I welcome as a first step what the Commonwealth conference has agreed in Nassau,

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

subject to review in six months, when further steps may be decided. But 98 per cent. of that situation will be based on the political change that occurs inside South Africa. That is an unavoidable conclusion. Do the white Ministers in South Africa have the wisdom and intelligence to make the essential moves, following the South African President's suggestions? Those Ministers have been very vague. Little has happened by way of improvements and reforms. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary cited the good example of the Mixed Marriages Act, but the awful vast panoply of apartheid legislation remains basically intact still.

My wife and I met many members of all the communities in South Africa. My colleagues and I insisted on such meetings although the South African Government prefer people just to see the more pleasant aspects and the collaborators with the apartheid regime—the so-called Uncle Toms who are themselves in a tragic personal situation because of increasing pressures and the ominous revolutionary developments that are occurring because of the myopia of the South African Government and their agents.

We sat in on the surgeries of the very brave and robust middle-class ladies who run the Black Sash movement and heard the tearful despair of the blacks, dispossesed from their land, unable to pursue proper educational opportunities and worst of all having to pay for education, although their incomes are much lower, while white education is free. These are some of the iniquities of a grotesque system that must go quickly, without any further delay.

It is all very well for some of my hon. Friends to say that we must give South Africa time because such changes need a long time to effect. This is 1985, the age of mass communications, of television all over the world. More and more, people are demanding their political rights. We saw the blacks of the United Democratic Front who themselves are mostly moderate and middle-class. One of them has now been indicted on the first day of the high treason trial. She is a 67-year-old lady, middle-class and moderate, who up till now has completely rejected violence, and whose other main interest is flower arranging. She is treated as a dangerous opponent of the apartheid Government who assume that she must be convicted. Thank God that the judiciary is to some extent still separate from the Executive.

Such people are radicalised into being ineluctable revolutionaries, when they do not want to be. The South African Government govern such a depressing country. One apologises if one is being naive—I do not think that I am particularly naive—but I found South Africa one of the most depressing countries in the world, aside from what goes on behind the iron curtain. It is amazing that that Government have not grasped the essential message of what they must do — bring justice and equality to all citizens, whatever the specific constitutional structure. It could be the federation idea or the geographical federation idea proposed by the Progressive Federal party—many of whose members are extremely courageous and are trying to do their bit for the majority black community, the coloureds and the Indians. It could be a mixture of those and some other things or, what is now coming—as a result of the stupidity of the national Government — the one-man, one-vote single unitary state, if the ANC wins what is rapidly turning into a civil war.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton (Mr. Carlisle) when he says that there are few incidents in South Africa. The situation is ghastly, and I think that the number of people killed exceeds the official figures. It is probably over 1,000 and many people have also disappeared. There is no justice there.

Overwhelmingly, the impression that we got from our recent visit was that the blacks have had enough. They are seething with anger, rage and resentment and will not wait any longer for false promises, delayed assurances of better times coming and the bright horizon at the end of a very long tunnel. They want action now and they do not want to wait any longer.

It is interesting that the business community, courageously and with great imagination, has taken forward the frontiers of politics and is pressing constantly for political reform. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) spoke about the business community visiting the ANC. I was slightly amused by a couple of the ANC suggestions at the end of its long catalogue of things needed for political reform to avoid a violent upheaval —its members are still saying that. One was to change the flag, which although a minor measure might be a good thing, and the other was to have English as the official language instead of Afrikaans. Although that would offend many Afrikaners, it is a significant thing in political terms too.

There are members of the Afrikaner tribe, that white tribe, who wisely see the need for change not gradually or slowly—all that is in the past, because it is too late—but rapidly. They are doing their best, again through the business community and so on, to press for rapid reform.

There are still white people in South Africa who could, if they so chose, spend a comfortable life on the basis of seeing no black people at all. My wife was taken to a country club, an extremely sybaritic institution. A very wealthy lady asked my wife, "Where is Soweto and what is it like?" after the visit that my wife made to that township. In a neighbouring township, our group saw unbelievably disgusting housing conditions for black people, which would have been unimaginable in the worst slums of Britain before the war. All that adds up to a picture that the House is, I think, at one in condemning, as we condemn one of the worst systems of politics in the world. It is an unfair system, which leaves one with a feeling of nausea again and again. It is difficult for us to imagine that this system still exists in 1985.

Do not let us allow Labour Members to undermine or doubt the complete sincerity of the vast majority of Conservative Members in their detestation and condemnation of the system just because we feel that there are other ways for the international community to try to get the essential political changes in South Africa.

6.24 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Dykes) made a refreshing speech and one which some of his hon. Friends ignore not so much at their peril as at the peril of millions of people in South Africa, who do not have the facility to express their views, but whose opinions should be taken into account during our debate.

At the start of the recess my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), several of my hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and myself visited Botswana and Swaziland. We visited Gaberone and the scene of the crime, for it was a crime. It was where the South African commandos had visited a housing estate, blown up houses and shot a number of people. We saw the spot where a four-year-old boy had been shot and we saw the line of bullets that had followed the little boy as he ran across the bedroom.

The Foreign Secretary asked us to enter into a dialogue. We are all for dialogue, but it is difficult to enter into one with a country with people who operate such standards. Moreover, it is not simply a question of sanctions, although they are very important. If not in some of the speeches that we have heard today, certainly in some of the Government's actions we are offering succour to the regime in South Africa, at the expense of liberty and achievement for its people.

I draw the attention of the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State, who I understand will reply to the debate, to an article that appeared in *The Guardian* today. I invite a response to this article, which is headed:

"Pretoria gets UK arms despite UN trade embargo".

It says:

"Mrs. Thatcher's assertion at Nassau that Britain operates effective military sanctions against South Africa conceals a multitude of flaws that has left the British arms embargo open to continuous and widescale abuse.

British Buccaneers and the Rolls-Royce powered Impala fighters of the South African air force fly with ground guidance from British radar systems in support of forces which use British Land Rovers, British ICL police computers and small arms, and artillery supplied through British firms. Some of this is legal trade, the rest is smuggled, but the sum total means that the British sanction is weakly-drawn, riddled with loopholes, and unenthusiastically enforced."

If only half of that is true it is an outrage, and the Foreign Secretary and the Government should be doing something about it.

Even with sanctions, which I fully support, we cannot deal with the problem in South Africa. Despite what some Conservative Members have said today, a revolution is already on its way. They may not know it, but we are seeing it on television every night. The choice is between sanctions and revolution. The British people do not like the South African system, and every Commonwealth country despises it. Therefore, is it not appalling that this Parliament, because of some Conservative Members, is seen as apologist for such a system?

South Africa's record, extending to its attitude on Namibia and Angola, leaves a great many questions unanswered and invites a great deal of pressure. The tragedy is that we cannot deal with many of these problems. The United Nations is seriously considering these patterns because of the human rights issue, which obviously has the greatest priority in that country and is therefore the outstanding issue in this debate.

Yesterday, as I understand it, in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster we had the biggest lobby ever. That lobby was on the subject of overseas aid and development. Splendid though that lobby was in its own right, many of my constituents told me that the tragedy of the Commonwealth conference was that the Heads of State did not have time to deal with those vital issues because of our own Prime Minister's intransigence and because the other Commonwealth leaders were so kind and so willing to find the kind of agreement that ought to have been available from the start of that conference.

Mr. Hunter *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way as time is not on my side and the hon. Gentleman has already spoken.

It seems that those involved in the struggle in South Africa are fighting for freedom and are involved in actions which we might deplore but which in many ways are the only avenue open to them. We would welcome democracy if that would give the people the chance to express their views. The demands of Nelson Mandela are very simple and were clearly stated in a brilliant interview in *The Times* of 24 July 1985. He demanded three conditions which I think are eminently reasonable: a unified South Africa with no artificial homelands, black representation in the central Parliament and, finally, one man, one vote.

At the Commonwealth conference a commission was set up to seek change. Notwithstanding the views expressed today about the ANC, terrorists and the rest, that commission includes distinguished statesmen. It includes the Prime Minister of India, whose grandfather served a prison term because he was fighting for independence and that was the only way to do it, and Mr. Mugabe, who has had a similar experience.

We have heard a great deal about history today. The lesson of history is that if we deny democratic expression, people will find other ways to pursue their views. Is there not a compelling obligation upon us, as the Mother of Parliaments and as a country which has such standing in the Commonwealth and the world, to show that we mean what we say when we talk about universal progress in democracy and of human rights?

It is a matter of great regret and concern that, in view of the problems which my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) mentioned — the debt crisis, recycling, world poverty and the rest—we are not able to make progress in trying to solve these outstanding issues. People make all kinds of excuses for the absence of human rights in South Africa. I believe that the world and certainly the front-line states are telling us that they have waited far too long to see freedom and liberty prevail. If the House has not heard that message tonight, it has not heard anything at all.

6.33 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): When I was asked in South Africa what I thought about a reform programme for apartheid I said, "You cannot reform it, you cannot humanise it—all you can do is abolish it, and the sooner the better." However great one's intellectual conviction against the system, when one sees it on the ground and talks to those who suffer under it every day, when one sees the endless pin-pricking humiliations and the anger that anyone on the receiving end of it must feel, it is hard to imagine how people do not boil over.

There is then the problem of actually defining apartheid. People say that it should be abolished by dismantling everything back to 1948, but that still does not get to the heart of it. The Land Acts of 1936 and 1913 were produced out of a society and the underlying attitudes must be changed. That is one of the great difficulties faced by the South African Government. In rescinding certain measures recently, they have been doing the right thing in

[Mr. Michael Knowles]

some areas but even when they are doing the right things there is the problem of the method by which those things are done. It is no longer a time when the white man, even when he is doing right, can graciously hand things down. The black man will no longer accept that attitude, and it must go.

Part of the problem for the South African Government is that they do not see any recognition from the outside world for what they have done to dismantle apartheid, because the outside world is unwilling to see merit in dismantling a structure that should never have been put in place. The question for us is how we can help South Africa and all her peoples. We certainly ought to do so, because many of the problems in South Africa were of our making. In saying that, I refer specifically to British Parliaments and British Governments. If Zululand had been made a separate Crown colony, it would now be an independent state along with Lesotho and Swaziland.

One does not have to scratch an Afrikaner very hard to be reminded of the British concentration camps and of the attempts to anglicise the Afrikaners and to destroy their culture and language. Then there was the division of the Tswana nation into two separate parts. One part was taken into British Bechuanaland while the other, by our decision, was taken into the Cape Colony. Now half the Tswana are in Botswana while the other half are in Bophuthatswana, which the rest of the world does not recognise because it is seen as a child of apartheid. But Chief Mangope and those who negotiated with Pretoria have succeeded in getting 1,500,000 of their people out from under the heel of apartheid and in their position I —and, I suspect, many other hon. Members— would have done exactly the same.

A little humility would not come amiss from all British politicians when discussing this problem. We do not have a lot to be proud of in our record in South Africa. We should consider carefully what has happened to the colonies that we ran until recently and to which we then gave independence and think carefully before we start prescribing what other people should do. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) especially may take this amiss, but it is clear that all too often when Afrikaners are preached at by British politicians they hear not our present dulcet tones but the voices of Joe Chamberlain and Lord Cromer.

Mr. Bodgen: Lord Milner.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In addressing the problems all those factors must be borne in mind.

Having visited South Africa, I am convinced that sanctions are entirely the wrong road. Apartheid has been undermined by a growing economy necessitating blacks taking an increasing number of managerial jobs. Therefore, one wants the economy to grow, not to be bankrupted. Many people have spoken of the disbenefits of sanctions. Another would be that business would become more independent on Government intervention and therefore less able to bring pressure to bear on the South African Government for reform.

We spoke to various people in South Africa about the situation in the townships and about all the talk of revolution. Having visited the townships, what remains in my memory is the statement of one black leader that all that talk was nonsense, that, horrendous though it might seem, the security forces had not even shown their teeth and that if such a situation arose there would be massacre and bloodshed on an unimaginable scale. So anyone who talks in those terms or in any way encourages such a situation bears a very heavy burden indeed. There is a suspicion among many whites in South Africa that some police officers use inordinate force because they disagree with the South African Government's policy of reform. There is suspicion that they are deliberately trying to wreck the steps that have been taken already.

How can we help? The Americans have recently set up education scholarships for the educating of South African blacks in the United States, which is an example worth emulating. Let us by aid change the education system in South Africa. Let us by aid build the economy of South Africa and the whole of southern Africa. That building might have to be on a vast scale. It is important that more parliamentarians and politicians from Britain visit South Africa to talk to all South Africans. We must try to understand the many complexities. The problems of the peoples of the First and Third worlds living cheek by jowl pose enormous strains on any society. We must try to help in the evolution of a South African settlement that is acceptable to all their peoples instead of prescribing a British or European solution. That is not a dramatic or revolutionary approach.

What is the alternative? Are we to encourage black and white to embark on a fratricidal war, with the survivors living in a semi-desert? That is not a solution with which I wish to be associated. It is a cruel jest of history that the Afrikaners are now seen as the last white oppressors in Africa when they, as the only white Africans, are better qualified and better placed than anyone else to help the black Africans move into the modern world.

6.42 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), in a thoughtful speech, made a cogent point about training. The lack of training for the blacks is one of the tragedies of South Africa. If, after Sharpeville in 1960 and Soweto in 1970, the South African Government, in co-operation with the world community, had set about training their black majority, and had they been willing in 1960 to embark on a process of negotiation with the black majority, how different the position would now be in South Africa, and how much more real would be the prospect of ordered change, rather than that of revolutionary change, which, sadly, for both blacks and whites in South Africa, is now yawning.

No one is interested in the destruction of South Africa's infrastructure. Everyone, both black and white, in the tragically confused country of South Africa has an interest in orderly transition, but change and fundamental change will come, and the real question is whether the whites will have the capacity to move with the times, or whether they will have that power snatched from them.

We are speaking against a background of escalating violence in South Africa. We learn daily of detentions, repression and deaths as we watch our television screens. We are speaking against a background, sadly, of increasing polarisation between black and white in that country.

When the State President talks about adding blacks to his advisory council, what blacks who have any sort of

credibility would dare now to enter into a dialogue with him? We are speaking, too, against a background of escalating sanctions both by international Governments and by the international finance and business community. Both sectors inter-react in that respect and with the mounting violence within the townships. In the knowledge that the real battle is being fought in South Africa itself, surely both business and governmental sanctions can only push along the process that we are witnessing. That must be the effect of the small changes which have latterly been taking place within South Africa.

We fear that the laid-back speech of the Foreign Secretary does not rise to the measure of the violence in South Africa and the rapidly changing situation in southern Africa, but it is at least consistent with the Government's craven attitude to South Africa over the past year and more. It was on 2 June 1984 that the Prime Minister welcomed President Botha to Chequers. We then had the Government accept with hardly a protest the ruling by the South African Government on their solemn pledge to the British courts on the bail conditions of the Coventry Four. Latterly, we have had the EC and the Commonwealth meetings. There have been the developments in Namibia, and surely even the Foreign Secretary, fine advocate as he is, cannot claim that a constructive engagement in respect of Namibia has in any way delivered the goods.

On 17 June there was inaugurated the puppet Government at Windhoek. Apparently that puppet Government are seeking to establish quasi-diplomatic missions in the West, including London. I hope that we shall have an undertaking from the Minister of State that the Government will do nothing by means of contacts or otherwise to give any form of legitimacy or credibility to the diplomatic mission that will be established in London.

The motion refers to the isolation of Her Majesty's Government. Bearing in mind what took place on 9 September at Luxembourg, and that which took place at Nassau, who can seriously argue that the Government are not isolated over South Africa? At the time of the EEC meeting at Luxembourg, nine of the 10 existing members and the two Iberian countries were aligned on one side and the Minister of State, with what he now describes as his reservation, was on the other. What other definition but isolation can there be of the Government's lonely position at Luxembourg?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) talked about the South African Government's military attachés, which we still have in London. As we cannot export arms to South Africa or import arms from that country, and as, so far as I am aware, we have no wish to invade neighbouring countries, perhaps the Minister of State will indicate the role of the South African military attachés in Britain. What possible reason can there still be, consistent with the agreement reached at Luxembourg, for still allowing the South African Government to have military attachés in this country?

It seems that on any basis the Prime Minister was the only person who was not in step at Nassau. I have a certain sympathy with the hapless Foreign Secretary, whose task it is to follow the Prime Minister around the world endeavouring to pick up the pieces in this area of policy as in others. The heavy Foreign Office briefing that continued to the 11th hour at Nassau was to the effect that the Prime Minister was not for turning and that there would be no economic sanctions. Be they called sanctions, measures or signals, something of significance was yielded by the Prime Minister at Nassau.

On any definition of "economic", can anyone argue seriously that the ban on the sale of krugerrands and the ban on Government loans do not amount to economic sanctions? It is surely an example of No. 10-speak to claim that these measures are not economic sanctions. It is significant that the Prime Minister has ceded her objection in principle to economic sanctions. She has started along that road and she can no longer claim that she is against economic sanctions in principle. Hence the new Foreign Office line is that we are against major economic sanctions but not economic sanctions, again as defined by the Foreign Office.

The Nassau communiqué calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Nelson Mandela. Can the Minister of State seriously argue, in the spirit of that agreement, that we are calling on the South African Government immediately, unconditionally, with no question of violence, to release Nelson Mandela? How can we claim that and yet still refuse point blank at either ministerial or official level to meet representatives of the ANC? How consistent is that stand of the Government's with the well-known position that the Government are prepared to meet representatives of the other liberation movement, SWAPO, in Namibia?

In an interview with the *New York Times* some two weeks ago the Secretary of State, Mr. Shultz said of apartheid that it was "finished", "over" — a very different tune from that which he was playing but six months ago. He went on to say, however, that unless the South African authorities were prepared to come to terms with their majority, to accommodate themselves to the black majority, there would be revolution, and that time was not on their side.

The Nassau agreement has called for fundamental change. Does the Minister seriously believe that the current pace, the current response of President Botha in his speeches to his own party conference, give any confidence at all that there is that recognition of the need for fundamental change within the republic?

No one has an interest in violent change. We on the Opposition Benches believe that there must be a range of pressures on South Africa, allied with those who are fighting the fight internally, in townships, in the trade unions, politically and so on. But it is only by the intensification of sanctions that positive change can come. In all the relevant world forums, in the EEC, in the Commonwealth and in the United Nations, Britain has become increasingly isolated. To our shame we are now perceived by the world as the best friend of South African apartheid.

6.51 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): During this short debate, powerful and eloquent speeches on both sides have demonstrated the deep division in the House on the best way of combating the evil of apartheid. The speeches have also demonstrated the unanimity with which the House speaks to the Government and people of South Africa with regard to the system of apartheid and the urgent need for it to be dismantled.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): That is not true.

Mr. Rifkind: It may disappoint the hon. Member, but it is the case.

I pay tribute to the moving speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) to the very powerful speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and to others of my hon. Friends who have made it abundantly clear that apartheid is a system which is repugnant and abhorrent. Not one hon. Member on either side of the House has given any support whatsoever in this debate to either the principle or the practice of apartheid. That is of great importance. The House unanimously believes apartheid to be repugnant to modern civilisation and wishes to see it disappear.

But there is a unanimity of view between Government and Opposition that, in addition to diplomatic pressure and diplomatic representations, it has been accepted for several years that there is a case to be made for additional measures; we have supported the arms embargo against South Africa, we have refused nuclear collaboration with South Africa and a number of other measures of that kind have been imposed by successive Governments over a period. This is because we have drawn in the past and draw at present a clear distinction between those pressures, sanctions, measures—call them what one will—which will damage apartheid and bring pressure on the South African Government, on the one hand, and that which we are not prepared to support—measures designed to do the maximum damage to the South African economy without regard to the consequences for the people of South Africa and for that country's future economy.

This is a vital distinction because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) rightly pointed out, one of the clear indications of recent years is how the very development and industrialisation of South Africa has been one of the prime causes for the growing realisation among the white people of that country that apartheid is a system without a future. We know perfectly well that in a primitive, rurally based economy it is at least physically possible to divide the races on the grounds of their colour, but that, once we have a modern industrialised system, then, quite apart from the moral considerations, it is impossible to contemplate a society that does not take account of the need to integrate all the economic benefits which that modern society can provide. That is the overwhelming reason why it is indeed the business community of South Africa that has been in the forefront of this process of reform, and why one can say with absolute conviction that capitalism and apartheid are mutually incompatible, for reasons which the business community in South Africa has clearly demonstrated.

When we say that we are against economic sanctions that are designed to destroy the South African economy, we say so for various reasons, all of which are powerful and convincing. We must learn from the lessons of history. We know perfectly well that economic sanctions, including comprehensive mandatory sanctions, have never had the effect desired.

The right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) pointed to the example of Rhodesia. I lived there for two years. I worked at the university of Rhodesia in Salisbury when comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions were being applied in theory by the whole world. She pointed to the evasion of the sanctions by South Africa and by Portugal. Of course, she was right. What she did not point out but what I can tell her, as can many others, is that during that very period, if one lived in Salisbury, one could buy any car one wanted from a number of countries which I shall not mention, any consumer item imported from various parts of the world——

Dame Judith Hart: They were coming through South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Lady says that that was happening because they were coming through South Africa. Let us assume that the world imposed comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, a country that is not a small, landlocked territory but has a vast coastline, a powerful navy and the money to pay for what it needs. Is it seriously suggested that the United Nations, the Commonwealth or anyone else could impose an embargo on South Africa to prevent access to those goods? If that is not the case, it demonstrates the absurdity of the argument.

Dame Judith Hart: The Minister clearly fails to appreciate that, since goods could not go into South Africa by land routes no company supplying such goods would be likely to risk sanctions-breaking by trying to mount a pirate operation.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Lady should not let herself in for that sort of statement. She will be the first to admit that people will try to get goods to South Africa if the price to be paid is worth their while; and if the South African Government are determined to bust sanctions then, with their long coastline and powerful navy, they will be perfectly able to do so.

There is an additional reason. As was eloquently demonstrated by a number of my hon. Friends, insofar as sanctions did damage or destroy the South African economy, the people who would suffer most would not be the wealthiest or the strongest but the weakest members of the community. It is true that many black South Africans have said that they are prepared to see sanctions if that will lead to the demolition of apartheid—and, of course, if it could be shown that sanctions would lead to the disappearance of apartheid in the next six, 12 or 18 months, many would be prepared to make that sacrifice. But the history of the world shows that that is not what would happen and that the effect would be the opposite if comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions were applied.

I heard last night that the right hon. Leader of the Opposition had said—I believe that he was quoted on television — that right across the whole spectrum in South Africa and in the front line states there had been a persistent demand for the past 25 years for tight, effective sanctions to promote the prospects of peaceful change. It so happens that over those 25 years many people have quite sincerely called for mandatory economic sanctions. In that period, there were at least 11 years of Labour Government. During that period when, according to the Leader of the Opposition, the world as a whole was calling for mandatory economic sanctions, the Labour Government did not believe in them, implement them or even advocate them.

If that point is disputed by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who was a very senior member of those Labour Governments, I will happily give way to him if he wishes. The right hon. Gentleman is unusually shy at the moment. Perhaps I can help to refresh his memory. I cannot quote what he said, because he was

careful not to be in a position in the Government that would have exposed him, but the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who was Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said:

"Economic sanctions would have grave consequences for ordinary people here and throughout South Africa. We want to use our links with the Republic to promote peaceful change while there is still time."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1977; Vol. 940, c. 770.]

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): After the long experience that we have had of trying to make changes, it is clear that that sort of pressure does not work. In Namibia we repeatedly thought that it might achieve some success, but we did not succeed. I now no longer believe that we can succeed unless we apply additional pressures and cross the barrier of effective sanctions. That is a perfectly reasonable case.

Mr. Rifkind: That was a valiant attempt by the hon. Gentleman, but so far I have quoted only one of the things that he said. He was courageous enough to speak again on the issue in 1978, when he said of comprehensive mandatory sanctions:

"We have voted against, together with France, West Germany, the USA and some other Western countries, because we do not agree that the far-reaching economic measures which the resolution calls for would produce the changes in South Africa which we all wish to see." — [*Official Report*, 16 January 1978; Vol. 942, c. 9.]

The Opposition ask us to vote for a motion which regrets the isolation of the United Kingdom in the Commonwealth, the EEC and the United Nations. However, far from being isolated in the United Nations in opposing mandatory economic sanctions—the sanctions for which the Leader of the Opposition has called—we are in the company of the whole of western Europe, the United States and the rest of the western industrialised world. Far from being isolated in the Commonwealth—the motion must have been written before the conclusion of the Commonwealth conference—we have agreed a communiqué which was unanimously endorsed by all the Commonwealth Heads of Government. Finally, saying that we are isolated in the EEC overlooks the fact that mandatory sanctions are opposed by all member states of the European Community, including those with Socialist Governments.

It is not the Government who are isolated in the western world but the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is the only senior political leader in western Europe—the only major Government or Opposition figure—to call for comprehensive, mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa. On that basis, I invite the House to reject his motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 302.

Division No. 297] **[7.03 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Duba, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allen *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*

Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Don Dixon.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Coffris, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Sexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the Commonwealth accord on South Africa and especially the call to initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government.

Urban Disturbances

Mr. Speaker: We now move to the second debate, which is on an independent judicial inquiry into the recent urban disturbances. I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I appeal for short speeches. The average from the Back Benches in the last debate was 10 minutes; that was helpful and appreciated by the House.

7.16 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move,

That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Government to set up an independent judicial inquiry into the recent urban disturbances and matters relevant thereto.

Ever since the Handsworth disturbances began at 6 pm on the evening of 9 September, the nation has been distressed and alarmed by the spectacle of riot, arson, looting, rape and horrific murder, manifested in a terrible rash from north to south on the map of Britain. In the six weeks since then, millions of words have been written in an effort to comprehend what took place and attempts have been made to discern a pattern. It is true that in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham the disturbances took place in inner city areas with considerable black communities, but there were disorders too in places whose character is far from uniform: stoning in Southall, stoning and arson in Toxteth, petrol bombing in Peckham, window smashing in Welshpool, fighting between youths and police in Gloucester, stoning and window smashing in Harrogate, petrol bombing and looting after——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Before my right hon. Friend leaves that point, does he agree that these problems go far wider? In the mining communities, problems are simmering now among youths who have no future and no hope of jobs. If no action is taken in these areas, there will be headlines similar to those which appeared recently in my local newspaper on 3 October:

"Knives and hammers used in battle.
Gang terror on estates".

Those problems will continue in the mining communities unless the Government take some action.

Mr. Kaufman: I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said, and I shall seek to deal with those matters because, as he says, they go far wider. For example, the latest riot after a football match in Leicester included looting and, for the first time, petrol bombing.

All these profoundly disquieting events have taken place against the background of a wave of lawlessness throughout the nation. Serious crimes have risen from 2·5 million in 1978 to nearly 3·5 million last year. Offences of criminal damage—the category of crime closest to vandalism—have risen by a devastating 63 per cent. Meanwhile, the crime clear-up rate has fallen nationally to only 35 per cent. Nowhere is crime more loutish and cruel than in the vicious and sadistic attacks on Asians, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) drew attention so powerfully on Monday.

Society is suffering from a sickness of violence and from a deep failure to understand and accept the origins of that sickness, let alone to cope with it. The wave of crime and disorder is easier to denounce than to cure. Of course, there are those who are ready with simplistic labels

[Mr. Kaufman]

and with headlines such as "sheer wickedness". There are those who offer easy explanations, blaming riot on itinerant extremist political agitators. Although some people claim to have seen these sinister persons passing through riot areas with the political equivalent of snow on their boots, no firm evidence is forthcoming. If the revolutionary Communist party, the anarchists or the National Front are involved, an inquiry could provide the evidence.

In the immediate aftermath of Handsworth, the Home Secretary categorised what took place there as

"not a social phenomenon but crimes".

There were dreadful crimes, including two horrible murders, but if there was no social phenomenon, why were the crimes committed in Handsworth and not in the Home Secretary's constituency of Witney?

For her part, the Prime Minister at the Conservative party conference declared that in the 1930s, when unemployment was proportionately higher and virtually unrelieved by benefits, crime levels were not higher, but lower. In fact, very serious disorders took place in the 1930s, involving the unemployed, but if there is a basic difference in the nature of the disturbances now compared with 50 years ago, as I believe there is, ought not the Prime Minister to have had the humility and the self-searching to ask herself why? Would not an inquiry help to find an answer? In her speech, the Prime Minister was sure of the solution. As she put it, all we needed was steadfastly to back the police. She went on:

"If they need more men, more equipment, different equipment, they shall have them."

The Home Secretary sings a different tune. He too, says that he backs the police—that is the easy bit—but when the president of the Police Superintendents Association asked for further resources and told the Home Secretary

"ignore us at your peril,"

the Home Secretary snubbed him with a refusal:

"I see no prospect of a general loosening of the purse strings which would enable us to transform the difficulties which you mention."

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall not give way, because an enormous number of hon. Members wish to speak and I do not think that it would be fair to them to give way.

When the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman, asked the Home Secretary last week for an increase in manpower, the Home Secretary did not respond. Instead, he lectured Sir Kenneth about the need to give value for money. The recent Government statement on public expenditure plans provides for a reduction in real terms in total expenditure on the police. The Prime Minister's grandiloquent conference rhetoric had a pretty threadbare look the morning after.

That rhetoric is not only dishonest, but dangerous. Of course, we must all give firm support to the police in their brave and steadfast fulfilment of their proper duties. I state categorically that the police will always have that support from Her Majesty's Opposition and that they will be given that support when we become the Government. This Government will not have our support in their deliberate and cynical inculcation of a cult of the police which has no place in a democratic society. The police deserve our support, but I am sure, as many of them make plain, they realise and accept that in a democracy no one is above criticism, whatever uniform he or she wears.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No, I shall not give way.

Every appointed official must be accountable to the elected authority, which derives from the sovereign people alone. The Scarman inquiry of 1981 was set up under the Police Act 1964. Some 50 pages of the report dealt with the police and with criticisms of the police. How otherwise could the Home Secretary two days ago have claimed with justice that most of the recommendations of Scarman with regard to the police had been accepted and implemented?

We need a proper, co-ordinated inquiry, and not the litter of sectional and unrelated investigations to which the Home Secretary has referred, to vindicate the police, where necessary to assist them and where appropriate to remedy their defects. It is no good having an inquiry into the shooting of Mrs. Groce if we do not set that shooting in the context of police action in Brixton. It is no use having an inquiry into the death of Mrs. Jarrett if we do not set the sorry circumstances of that death against the background of the relations between the police and the community in Tottenham, relations apparently so flawed that rioting took place against the express plea of Mrs. Jarrett's family.

This morning I visited the Broadwater Farm estate and had the privilege of speaking to one of the most remarkable women I have ever met, the magnificent Mrs. Dolly Kiffin, whose extraordinary personality and drive have galvanised admirable and heartening voluntary community action in that urban desert. What she said to me about the period leading up to the riot convinced me absolutely of the need for an inquiry, and convinced me, too, that there is little point in painstaking work to improve police-community relations — painstaking work there undoubtedly has been—if one event, however traumatic, can destroy in a moment the efforts of months and years. As the *Sunday Telegraph* said in a leading article last week:

"If the same friendly bobbies on the beat who have been practising community policing on weekdays have on Saturday night to turn themselves into riot-quellers hiding behind shields and swinging truncheons, that progress will be swiftly reversed."

On Monday, hon. Members on both sides of the House expressed disquiet about certain police methods and tactics. If a fraction of the anecdotes published in the press are true, they must arouse concern among all who care for the good name of the police. There is the claim of one Brixton woman that a policeman called her a black bastard and that police smashed the glass in her door and shouted repeatedly, "Nigger go home."

There is the claim of another black woman in Brixton, Paula Belsham, that when she was taking a bath one afternoon, her front door was knocked in with a sledgehammer, a gun was held to her temple, and plainclothes police showed her a warrant and threatened to kill her dog with a sledgehammer.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St Edmunds): Where is the evidence?

Mr. Kaufman: Wait a moment. She claims that she was examined internally with a man present and that her home was ransacked. If that is true, it ought to end the most stringent discipline. If it is untrue, it ought to be categorically disproved.

As well as criticisms of the police, there are criticisms by the police about the tactics they are made to employ in riots which in their view place them in unnecessary danger and at risk. Chief Superintendent Leslie Stowe, secretary of the Police Superintendents Association, has called for a searching inquiry into the implications for the police of the handling of the Tottenham disturbance. He has stated that Sir Kenneth Newman and the Police Federation also want an inquiry. We need an examination of the use of firearms by the police, of training for their use, of whether the rules are being properly observed, and of whether the rules are right.

The shooting of Mrs. Groce and the killing of five-year-old John Shorthouse are only the latest tragic occurrences which have understandably aroused wide public concern. We need to look again at Lord Scarman's firm recommendation of an early introduction of an independent element in the investigation of complaints. After four years, that recommendation is still ignored—it has not been met by the newly installed police Complaints Authority.

We need an inquiry into the role of firemen in these disturbances. After the serious injury of a fireman in Balham last week, and following attacks on firemen in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham, the Fire Brigades Union is threatening to withdraw firemen from the areas where disturbances take place. As arson has become a frequent feature of such disturbances, the Fire Brigades Union is right to warn that the consequence to life and property of such a withdrawal would be horrendous.

It was my privilege, three months ago, to be chief guest at the passing-out parade of police cadets at Bruche in Warrington. It was an impressive and heartening occasion, but it was sad that among the many cadets there was only one black youth and only one Asian. We need an inquiry into the failure of the police to attract black recruits. It is a failure which many believe has its roots in a deep distrust of the police by many black people, and about which we need to know much more. At the demand of the police, in the interests of the police, and in the interests of police-community relations, an inquiry must cover all these matters.

Lord Scarman insisted in his report that the police could not be viewed in isolation. He declared:

"I have sought to identify not only the policing problem specific to the disorders but the social problem of which it is necessarily part. The one cannot be understood or resolved save in the context of the other . . . it is necessary before attempting an answer to the policing problem to understand the social problem . . . the disorders in Brixton cannot be fully understood unless they are seen in the context of the complex political, social, and economic factors to which I have briefly referred. In analysing communal disturbances such as those in Brixton and elsewhere, to ignore the existence of these factors is to put the nation in peril."

On the aspects of social and racial disadvantage in Brixton, Lord Scarman said:

"they provide a set of social conditions which create a predisposition towards violent protest. Where deprivation and frustration exist on the scale to be found among young black people of Brixton, the probability of disorder must, therefore, be strong."

It is not only Lord Scarman who makes that connection. An authoratitive report from the Government-funded Economic and Social Research Council, published recently, said:

"Central government policies have had several negative effects: forcing increases in local rates, which, it might be argued, reduce the likelihood of business investment; reducing discretionary funds which local authorities might use for urban development; and, above all, restricting public sector employment which has been the only sector of inner city employment growth in recent years, particularly for disadvantaged urban residents."

The report warns:

"Recession has increased the numbers of those who have been drawn into an under-class of the unemployed and disadvantaged which is still disproportionately found in inner areas."

To do him credit, Lord Whitelaw admitted on Border television last Friday in a discussion about the riots that unemployment was a factor. In our view, it is essential that there is an inquiry into the whole context of unemployment and deprivation, where there has been disturbing deterioration since the Scarman report of 1981.

In an index quoted by the ESRC report, inner Birmingham is listed as the most deprived area in the United Kingdom. It is followed by Liverpool in third place, and Lambeth in 16th. In a Department of the Environment index on deprivation, Haringey features three times among the worst 10.

A simple comparison demonstrates the plight of some of the areas where there have been riots in recent weeks. If we look at unemployment in the relevant parliamentary constituencies as a percentage of the respective electorates, we find that in Tottenham it is 15 per cent., in the three Birmingham constituencies covering Handsworth it is also 15 per cent., and in the relevant Lambeth constituency it is 15 per cent. In the Liverpool, Riverside constituency it is 20 per cent., and in the Whitney division of Oxfordshire it is 4 per cent. Is this stark contrast a social phenomenon, or is it a crime? In Brixton unemployment stands at 33 per cent. In Handsworth it is 35·8 per cent., with a youth unemployment rate of 50·5 per cent. On the Broadwater Farm estate, some 60 per cent. of youths are unemployed.

Lord Scarman repeatedly listed bad housing as a feature of life in Brixton and one of the social conditions that created a predisposition towards violent protest. That was in 1981. In 1985, Lambeth has the worst homelessness problem in London and the second highest number of unfit dwellings. Overcrowding in Handsworth is more than two and a half times the average for Birmingham. A Department of the Environment report on the Broadwater Farm estate says:

"the long-term future of the estate seems bleak. At best the local authority can hope to make it tolerable for the next decade or so but eventually, because the estate is so monolithic and comprises such a large portion of their total housing stock, the possibility of demolition is one what will have to be considered."

It is of this estate that the president of the Royal Institute of British Architects said last week:

"There are similar estates to Broadwater Farm around the country. They can work very well, but they need to be loved and maintained".

Haringey borough council would like to maintain Broadwater Farm, but I should like to quote again from the Department of the Environment report on that estate. It says:

"Unfortunately, with cuts in public expenditure, Haringey have abandoned remedial work on existing estates in order to concentrate scarce funds on rehabilitating acquired property so none of the other physical measures requested by tenants can be undertaken in the foreseeable future."

All the councils with these horrendous problems are running out of money.

On Monday, the Home Secretary boasted of what he claimed to be a tripling of the urban programme. The figures were misleading. They were stated not in real

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terms, but in cash terms. In real terms, the urban programme is now just £191 million more than it was in 1978-79. During that time the partnership authorities alone have lost not £191 million but more than £2 billion in reduced rate support grant.

Between them, the four authorities of Birmingham, Liverpool, Lambeth and Haringey have gained £15 million in urban programme money, in exchange for which they have lost £476 million in reduced rate support grant. That is not all. The aggregate loss of housing subsidy for those four authorities is a further £90 million. These are some of the most deprived areas in Britain. They are in desperate need of assistance, and yet the Government are draining away their financial lifeblood and insulting them with untrue claims of generosity.

It is no wonder that, in a Government-published document, an independent writer states that, following community efforts to improve Broadwater Farm—how that place needs improving—in the present climate of reduced capital spending, building on improvements of the past few years will be extremely difficult. No wonder Lambeth is scared of losing two more centres, sports facilities, community arts provisions and a training scheme. No wonder a report by the Roman Catholic bishops warns:

"Unless the present trend is reversed, the housing situation of deprived people, deprived groups and deprived areas will decline from scandalous to tragic, even lethal."

For none is the predicament more cruel than for the ethnic minority communities.

With the example of successful Asians in mind, the Home Secretary called last week for Afro-Caribbeans to set up their own businesses, but if simple mortgage lending is anything to go by, there is evidence of discrimination in lending policies against not only Afro-Caribbeans, but against Asians as well. The Commission for Racial Equality says that there is no justification for a state of affairs which puts Asians at such a disadvantage.

For most young Asians as well as Afro-Caribbeans, getting a job, let alone setting up in business, is just a remote dream. In Lambeth, unemployment among black young people is three times the rate for white youth. In Handsworth last year, 18 per cent. of white school leavers, 15·8 per cent. of Asians and 4·9 per cent. of Afro-Caribbeans obtained jobs. In Great Britain as a whole, Afro-Caribbean unemployment is twice that among white people, and among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis it is even worse.

We welcome the announcement by the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction of an extra £15 million for programme authorities and another £5·5 million for derelict land reclamation. We welcome also the statement by the Minister of State, Home Office that the ball is bounding towards contract compliance. We wish him well in his struggle against the opposition of his Government colleagues, but it is a great pity that it has taken another bout of riots to elicit these announcements. Encouraging though they are, they do not begin to add up to a genuine response to Lord Scarman's plea for a concerted, better co-ordinated attack on the problems of the inner cities, let alone his insistence on a policy of direct co-ordinated attack on racial disadvantage.

The possibility of an incalculably bleak future is made fearfully vivid in the remarks, reported today, that Prince Charles

"is very worried that when he becomes king there will be no-go areas in the inner cities and the minorities will be alienated from the rest of the country."

Are this Government, some of their members well-meaning but ineffectual, others purblind and stiff-necked, determined to preside over this deterioration in the Queen's realm? Do the Government lack the will, or the compassion, or the patriotism, to insist upon including the whole of our society and all our people in the national commonwealth? Are they resigned to presiding over a Britain in which, as Lord Scarman warned,

"disorder will become a disease endemic in our society"?

At the end of his historic report, Lord Scarman quoted from President Johnson's address to the nation which appears at the beginning of the United States' report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Lyndon Johnson said:

"The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack—mounted at every level—upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what those conditions are; ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack these conditions—not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society".

Those are the objectives which will motivate and inspire the Labour Government who will take office after the next general election. On our progress towards achieving those objectives we are ready to be judged.

7.43 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

"recognises the crucial importance of the maintenance of public order; applauds the courage and dedication of the police and responsible community leaders in restoring order; and welcomes Her Majesty's Government's commitment to early effective action in the light of the recent urban disturbances.".

As the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, we are discussing sobering—indeed, shocking—events. It is no good responding to them simply by the wringing of hands. We have to learn the right lessons from what has happened and to act on those lessons. The first immediate responsibility for coping with such events on the ground rests with the police. Secondly, there is a responsibility on the Government to shape policies that are calculated to avert disasters of this kind. There is also a wider responsibility on the part of the community as a whole, including Her Majesty's Opposition. I should like to touch briefly on all three responsibilities.

On Monday last I reported to the House on the work in hand relating to the police and the Government. The work in hand includes criminal investigations into the crimes which were committed and the investigation of incidents involving police officers. Those investigations will be under the independent supervision of the Police Complaints Authority. The work in hand also includes a review of police tactics, an analysis of police needs for equipment and manpower and action to meet those needs. In addition, it includes a further look at the targeting of public money resources in the inner cities to see whether

those resources are going to the right places to meet the right needs. All this has been announced and needs to be and is being done.

The question which remains, therefore, between the Government and the Opposition as regards procedure is whether, in addition to and on top of all this work which is in hand, there should be an over-arching judicial inquiry. Having listened to the right hon. Member for Gorton, it seems to me that, to meet his wishes, the scope of that inquiry would have to be very wide indeed.

My colleagues and I have decided against such an over-arching judicial inquiry. As Lord Scarman said, judicial inquiries should be rare. In this case, unlike 1981, the riots in Brixton and Tottenham were triggered by specific action by police officers. A judicial inquiry which did not go into these actions would get short shrift in the areas involved. The right hon. Member for Gorton listed a series of new, to me, unsubstantiated accusations against individual police officers in the context of his appeal for a judicial inquiry. Surely he knows that this is completely wrong. A judicial inquiry which attempted to cover these matters would prejudice completely the possibility of criminal proceedings even if, on investigation, such proceedings proved to be justified. The right hon. Gentleman has not met that point.

When things go wrong we should prefer those who have responsibilities, including responsibilities to this House, to learn the lessons—there are lessons to be learnt—as quickly as possible and to get on with the job, not to wait for the conclusion of a long, judicial inquiry. Therefore, we do not accept the main point of the Opposition's motion.

The Opposition would like greater public spending in the inner city areas, just as they would like greater public spending in almost every other sphere of human activity. They can argue, as the right hon. Gentleman did, about grant penalties and the loss of rate support grant, but what he said confirmed the fact that very large sums of money have been spent. Before one can argue that even larger sums of money should be spent, one has to be sure that the money already spent is going to the right places and that we have the right machinery for distributing it. I am not sure that we have. That is why we must ensure that the resources are properly targeted.

On Monday last I gave some figures relating to the urban programme. The right hon. Member for Gorton accused me of giving them in cash terms. They were perfectly accurate in cash terms. For the urban programme they amounted to an increase of treble in cash, and almost double in real terms. The right hon. Gentleman's figures confirmed that. That is not something of which we need to be ashamed. These are very large sums of money. Since 1979, £150 million in Birmingham and £140 million in Liverpool have been spent on the urban programme alone — *[Interruption.]* The additional urban programme resources are targeted upon specific and very pressing needs. The Opposition are interrupting about general local government expenditure which is not targeted on pressing needs in the same way.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am not giving way, because the right hon. Member for Gorton steadfastly refused to do so.

I shall give an example. In the London borough of Haringey, which the right hon. Member for Gorton cited, expenditure per pupil was the highest of any outer London borough, but the schools inspectorate was severely critical of the standard of education provided within that borough. It said that the problem was not one of additional resources.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am not giving way.

The more one looks at the reports of the Audit Commission, the more one sees that local government spending is not targeted on specific and pressing need, such as the urban crisis.

I ask the House to be wary of the argument underlying what the right hon. Member for Gorton said—that more spending equals fewer riots. That is too simple by half. It leaves out many factors all too obviously present in the particular incidents that we are discussing. It leaves out the excitement of forming and belonging to a mob, the evident excitement of violence leading to the fearsome crimes that we have seen reported and the greed that leads to looting —not the looting of food shops, but looting that leads to the theft of television sets, video recorders and other things that can be disposed of quickly. To explain all those things in terms of deprivation and suffering is to ignore some basic and ugly facts about human nature.

I refer to the specific points about policing with which the right hon. Member for Gorton dealt. I explained on Monday in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), what we are doing about manpower and equipment, and the immediate steps that we are taking both in London and in the provinces. I do not intend to repeat that today.

We are rightly committed to providing police forces with men and equipment that they need. The only test is one of need, and that test includes how the police forces are using the existing resources that they have. We shall get on with that work without delay.

The right hon. Member for Gorton admitted that many —indeed most—of Lord Scarman's recommendations on policing have been met. His recommendations dealt with the recruitment of Asian and black police officers, and most police forces are taking active steps in that direction. In June 1982 there were 386 Asian and black police officers. In July 1985 there were 726. That is an increase of 88 per cent. from an admittedly pitifully low base. I am not in the least complacent, as I said to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland on Monday, about progress on that. However, I am satisfied that the police forces understand the importance of improving on that achievement, and that they are doing their best to do so.

On Monday I was tackled about training, which was another Scarman recommendation. The leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, (Mr. Steel) tackled me on that. The period of basic training has been increased from a two-and-a-half month initial course to a four-month course, including two weeks at the end. The content has been changed. There is much more emphasis on the prevention and handling of disorder and on understanding the character of the city areas that many officers will go on to police.

I should like to say a word about community policing, because that phrase is often the subject of discussion. It is a phrase tossed about by myself and others without a clear

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definition of its meaning. That leads to misunderstanding, and I should like to say a word about it because I know it is of great interest to some of my hon. Friends.

When we on the Conservative Benches talk about community policing, we are talking not about a policy that ignores or excuses breaches of the law, nor about pacts that withdraw law enforcement in some way from particular areas, but about something much more basic and traditional. We are talking about policemen knowing their patch and understanding the people whom they protect. Police forces in this country are emphatically not an army of occupation. They work with and listen to the citizen. They must do so if they are to do their job.

Yesterday I read an interesting report to his police authority by a chief officer in a big city outside London. He had some difficulty because he found that some officers in his force were employed mainly on keeping in touch with the community and others were employed exclusively on law enforcement. The difficulty was that the first gained a reputation as soft cops and the second as hard cops. The officer changed the system—and he was right to do so. Every police officer on the ground should be in the business of law enforcement and should also be working at understanding the community in which he serves. I do not doubt that the Brixton riots would have been substantially wider and worse had it not been for the hard work put in by the police and the community since 1981.

I should like to take the opportunity, which I have not had before, of paying tribute to the courage and steadiness of many citizens in the inner cities who take the lead in their communities in working for consultation and co-operation with the police. It is not easy for them. I have heard at first hand of some of the difficulties that they face. They suffer harassment and abuse, yet they persevere.

That leads me to the point about the responsibilities of the Opposition. The right hon. Member for Gorton and many of his colleagues have stressed over the years that the desire for public order and success against crime is just as strong in Labour-held areas and on the Labour Benches as elsewhere. They are right in that. Perhaps that desire is stronger because in many respects they represent more of the victims. I accept that. However, in its own interests as well as ours, the Labour party must act to put an end to the activities carried out in its name, which encourage hostility and prejudice to the police. That is not just a point to be tossed about between the two sides. When one goes to London boroughs or parts of Birmingham, one sees that evil in operation on the ground. The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues must do something about it. The black list is too long.

The GLC is fortunately on its last legs, but its video is part of a campaign conducted throughout the years to portray the police as idle, insensitive, racist and corrupt. In the borough of Hackney, the neighbourhood watch scheme has been obstructed. In the borough of Newham, the council is trying desperately to keep police officers out of schools. In the borough of Lambeth, the neighbourhood watch scheme has been obstructed. There have been attempts to harass and destroy the consultative group that I mentioned. Immediately after the riot, when there was an appalling situation requiring local leadership, Mr. Knight made a statement blaming everything on everyone except the criminals and the louts.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the right hon. Gentleman withdraw his remarks about Birmingham?

Mr. Hurd: I have already paid tribute to what the right hon. Member for Gorton said about Birmingham. However, there are people in the Birmingham area who fall into the category that I mentioned.

Finally, I refer to the London borough of Haringey. We have been tolerant. A debate that deals with responsibilities cannot shirk the issue. The words uttered by Mr. Grant would have been thought unspeakable unless he had spoken them. I am not surprised that his own council's work force has been up in arms against what he said. There is a simple pointer that I would put to the Leader of the Opposition. Is Mr. Bernie Grant going to proceed as the official Labour party candidate for Tottenham with the support of the Labour party? May we have a direct answer to that question?

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I should be more than glad to respond to the right hon. Gentleman on this and many other subjects, but first I must say that he demeans himself as Home Secretary by opening a debate on a serious issue which has preoccupied millions of people in this country and deliberately diverting the challenges, charges and genuine demands for action by the Government to remove the roots of violence. I shall tell the right hon. Gentleman what will happen. In the Labour party, by due process of selection and election, we choose candidates. For as long as the party sustains that candidate, he remains the candidate. That is the democratic position.

Let us not forget that this is the Home Secretary, after a summer of riot, answering to the House of Commons and choosing to make cheap jibs to divert attention rather than to answer the nation's inquiries. We want answers, and we want them now. I should be pleased to respond to him on other matters if he would respond to the obligations of his task as Home Secretary.

Mr. Hurd: We are debating — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]—an Opposition motion calling for a judicial inquiry. I have explained why, in the Government's judgment, that is a mistake. I have explained in detail the nature of the Government's response to the problem and the steps that we are taking to resolve it.

I have mentioned the responsibility of the community, which includes the Opposition. I have put a direct question to the Leader of the Opposition—*[Interruption.]* I have discharged my responsibility and I ask him to discharge his. The House will judge whether he gave a direct answer to my question. *[Interruption.]* So long as he continues to dodge that question, it will be put to him with increasing force and persistence. Until we receive an answer, the right hon. Gentleman's credibility on these matters is nil.

It is natural, as we have observed, that as this is a national problem there are party angles in discussions about it.

I hope that the House will accept that there is no mood on the Conservative Benches and in the Government of sitting back and saying, "Well, perhaps the riots are dying down. Parliamentary debate will soon be over, and we can quietly forget the whole matter and sweep it under the carpet." That is emphatically not our view.

I find what has happened deeply tragic and worrying. The fires which were started in Birmingham and London

lit up for us a portrait of our inner cities that we cannot allow to fade from our mind. We must not forget what happened, because it could happen again.

I disagree with the motion moved by the right hon. Member for Gorton calling for a judicial inquiry and I disagree that public expenditure is the answer to the problem. However, I agree with him that most strenuous and imaginative work will now be required. I assure the House that we have no intention of allowing prejudice or complacency to stand in the way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Many hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. The briefer the speeches, the fewer the hon. Members who will be disappointed.

8.4 pm

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): The Home Secretary's predecessor told the House that he would never allow the politicisation of the Home Office, political control of the Home Office or politics to control the Home Secretary's actions. This Home Secretary has proved that his first allegiance is to the Conservative party. He has just repeated word for word the speech that he delivered to the Conservative annual conference. He forgot for one moment that he had come to the House of Commons to debate a major problem and make a policy statement from the Home Office. He used language that he used at the Tory party annual conference, for which he received a standing ovation. His politics and his attitude towards the Home Office are interchangeable.

The Home Secretary misused the education report made by the inspectors about the Haringey authority. Is the Home Secretary aware that the inspectors withdrew the bulk of that report because they said that it was unfair to Haringey as they had not used statistically correct comparisons and, that therefore, their criticism of the Haringey authority was not legitimate? The inspectors apologised to the London borough of Haringey. I expect the Home Secretary to apologise to the borough for using that report when the inspectors had withdrawn their criticism. I give him the opportunity to withdraw his allegations.

Mr. Hurd: I used a summary of the report which had been provided to me. I shall look into what the hon. Gentleman said. If what he said is correct I should not have used it in that way, but let me first check the facts.

Mr. Atkinson: I am most grateful for that generous comment. I am sure that the Home Secretary will keep to his word and will consider what I have said about the report.

I wish to associate myself and my colleagues in Haringey with all that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said in his powerful speech, especially when he referred to my borough and people such as Dolly Kiffin whom I admire for all the work that she has done and the way in which she has selflessly devoted herself to trying to build something out of the crumbling mass of that concrete jungle called Broadwater Farm. If ever there were a condemnation of social conditions, it is that place.

Let me comment upon the general drift of the argument and say without fear of contradiction that violence is no part of the Labour party's vocabulary. We must accept that. It has often been said, but we must make it clear in every statement we make on behalf of the Labour party.

The Labour party is in no way anti-police. The Labour party looks upon the police as an integral part of our society. Its attitude towards policemen is identical to its attitude towards teachers, public health workers, local authority workers, firemen and all other public sector workers. We often express admiration for some of the things that go on in our democracy for which the police have accepted responsibility. They have the support of the Labour party in carrying out those functions. I hope that we shall end this business of trying to link violence and some other nefarious activities with the leadership of the Labour party. The Labour party rejects violence. It condemns it whether it be on an industrial picket line or in community activity.

It is our responsibility to convince society that there are no short cuts. It is part of our responsibility and part of this debate to convince the police that there are no short cuts in their responsibilities. The responsibility is two-sided. There are no short cuts for the young people in Tottenham or any other part of London. There are no easy remedial actions that they can take to short-cut parliamentary politics, leadership or political activity in Britain.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Atkinson: I have promised not to give way because of the shortness of time. I shall make a few brief comments and then finish.

There are no short cuts on either side. The Labour party rejects any police strategy that is based upon control by violence. We look upon that idea with some horror. Sir Kenneth Newman and the Home Secretary are turning towards the use of gas, bullets and water, which I and many of my colleagues have described as legalised thuggery. They are moving towards the use of such horrendous weapons to control crowds and to implement policies decided by the Government.

There is a connection between the statistical evidence of the Home Office and the police force. I have looked up the arguments made by Home Secretaries, including Labour Home Secretaries, when there were 1 million unemployed. They defended the use of horses as part of police equipment. At that time all the arguments were about the use of horses and the violence that could occur. As we have moved towards more than 3 million unemployed, the arguments have progressed and now include the use of rubber bullets, gas canisters, water cannons and armoured vehicles. All this apparatus seems to relate closely to the pressures building up in society. As unemployment increases, the language of the Home Office becomes more violent and the chief officials of the police force start to argue that of necessity they must have this additional equipment. No one knows where this exponential curve that is taking shape will end; it is going upwards.

When the police get the bullets and the gas canisters, the next stage must be a paramilitary force. Sir Kenneth Newman wants 3,000 additional men and women in the police force in London. He wants a force similar to the riot police in Paris, which consists of 3,000 policemen in a barracks waiting for the riot to happpen, so that they can move out in their vans with all the equipment. Sir Kenneth

[Mr. Atkinson]

wants 3,000 extra men in barracks as a paramilitary force. The escalation of unemployment directly relates to police requirements.

The Home Secretary and Sir Kenneth Newman have abandoned consensus in the policing of London. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), a former Home Secretary for whom I have the greatest admiration, will know the arguments about consensus. The use of equipment such as gas will introduce the most controversial arguments. However, consensus will not matter. The Home Secretary says that he alone will make the decision. Sir Kenneth will say, "I want this, that or the other and I demand to have it," irrespective of whether there is consensus in the House of Commons for the use of such equipment. I believed that the Home Secretary was responsible to the entire House, and that he was the only democratically elected police authority to whom all Members of Parliament could put questions and from whom they would obtain a fair hearing. However, that is no longer true. He says that he will consult no one about the provision of water cannon, bullets or gas cylinders.

I should say something about what happened in Haringey. First, there have been protests about intimidatory policing, with the collection of evidence by the random searching of houses. There was a protest movement. I will not go into the details of that now, except to say this: following a meeting on the Broadwater Farm estate, the people decided to march on the police station and to picket it. The police then arrived with all their riot gear and said that the crowd had to be contained on the housing estate. That is what caused the confrontation. The police decided to contain people on the estate in order to prevent the picketing of the police station.

Sir Kenneth Newman says that he had already given permission for gas and rubber bullets to be used if necessary. Can one imagine what would have happened if they had been used? The decision to picket the police station was taken at a meeting of 350 black youths, where emotions were running high. They wanted to leave the estate and join a picket outside the police station, but were prevented from doing so. We can imagine the result had they been met by a hail of rubber bullets and gas. We would not be sitting here discussing philosophically a small, contained riot in Tottenham and trying to pick up the pieces. There would have been a national disaster if the police had gassed those young people in order to stop them going to the police station.

We hear protests about stop and search methods, which are mainly directed against black youths. The police in London are worried about their crime clear-up rates, and they wish to search as many houses as possible to find incriminating evidence. Therefore, they pick up youngsters and take them to the police station, while in the meantime another squad of policemen goes to their houses and searches them. I do not wish to debate whether that is a good or bad technique, but simply to point out that that is what the police do. That is what happened on this occasion: Cynthia died as a result of the police searching her house while her son was held at the police station. The black youths who wished to picket the police station complain that that happens thousands of times. Indeed, the figures for stop and search are in the millions. Such methods are part of police intimidation. The bargaining and guilt continue and the relationships between the police and our young people worsen.

I welcome the latest developments with the PCA. I am confident that Roland Moyle, our former colleague, will conduct a fair and independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of my constituent, Cynthia Jarrett. I am convinced that Peter Simpson of the Essex police will ably assist him in reaching a conclusion. That process is no substitute for what we demand. I entirely support the considerable wisdom uttered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton in putting the case for a judicial inquiry. I do not wish to minimise the work that Roland Moyle will do. The nation should clearly understand that the new Police Complaints Authority is now committed to investigate police techniques and methods. Those factors are legitimate considerations in any investigation.

I regret that the present Home Secretary's predecessor would not tell the House that he would debate the code of conduct for London police. We would like to discuss what is in that code of conduct. It is not too late for this Home Secretary to promise the House that hon. Members will be able clearly to debate the code of conduct which the police use as the basis of their moral judgments.

London Members often look enviously at the activities of their Scottish colleagues. There is such a thing as the Scottish Grand Committee. During the transitional period following the GLC's abolition, politics in London will be rebuilt. I should like a police authority created within a London Grand Committee that is charged with responsibility for looking at the Home Office, police work and the many millions of pounds that are spent by the London police. There should be accountability to the House for the money spent and the strategies pursued by the London Metropolitan police. Such a Grand Committee would help to overcome many of the problems faced during the transitional period. I hope that the House will seriously consider this proposal. I ask the Home Secretary to consider this means by which hon. Members, especially London Members, can be involved in the policing of London. This is not a one-way traffic. If we start to build confidence in the future we can ensure that the dreadful events of the past weeks will not recur.

8.23 pm

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I am sure that we can all agree that we face serious problems and that many causes, some deep-seated, contribute in their different ways to these disturbances. We have heard about a good many, and I want to mention some more. For far too long there has been far too much talk about rights and far too little talk about responsibilities. I believe, as was stated in the motion that received overwhelming support at our conference in Blackpool, that there must be major changes in much of the current thinking on parental rights and responsibilities, on teaching methods and responsibilities, on social service attitudes, on personal selfishness and on attitudes to crime and punishment before we can return to the decent law-abiding society which the overwhelming majority of our constituents, including the overwhelming majority of the unemployed and the poorest in our society, long to see, and look to us to give to them.

In view of the doom and gloom that has been expressed tonight it is well to remember that the picture is not all black—far from it.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Not in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency.

Sir Ian Percival: That is a very cheap remark, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not make any more like it.

Mr. Holland: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ian Percival: No, I will not.

Millions of young parents, many of them unemployed, and most with very limited means, and thousands of young teachers, deserve the warmest thanks and congratulations of all of us for managing to maintain moral values and decent standards in the face of every difficulty with which they are presented, thereby giving us the millions of super young people that we have in this country. But alas, far too many of our young people do not receive those same advantages — on the contrary, they are set the most dreadful example by people who should know better— to the great loss of those young people and our country.

Of course we must tackle those underlying factors but that is long term. My chief concern at the moment is how we shall gain time for ourselves to do that. We are assailed by such a combination of sheer villainy on an unprecedented scale exploiting every grievance, real and supposed, and a deliberate, skilled, organised and dedicated attack on our very way of life that, unless we face up to and beat those evils, we shall have little hope of having the time or opportunity to achieve our long-term aims and needs.

How is this to be done? The people are entitled to look to all in government—local and central—to do all in their power. They will know that they can have complete confidence in the Government's desire and determination to do that, as was made so clear by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary again this evening. Those in local government have a special responsibility too, especially because of their relationships and responsibilities in connection with policing.

The public will also look to the House of Commons. Now that we are witnessing a savagery of a kind that the House could never have had in mind in previous debates on punishment, the public may well expect that we should again debate whether existing punishments are adequate.

I want to spend my few minutes on the question of what each of us, both here and outside the House, can do as individuals. Of all the dos and don'ts that spring to mind, I am going to take just four—one "don't" and three "dos."

My "don't" is this. Do not let this become a battle of race or colour. In particular, do not let it become, much less make it become, as much of this debate might make it, a battle of race or colour. In particular, do not let it become a battle between black people and the police. That is the very thing that the troublemakers want. Whether or not it is done deliberately to provoke us, it is difficult sometimes for us white people who have always lived here to stomach the kind of thing that we have to listen to from such as Mr. Grant of Harringey. But it is not just black people stirring it up. There are white racists as well as black racists, and we have to resist all the efforts of all of them to stir up trouble between black and white, and particularly between black people and the police. To do otherwise would be to do exactly what is wanted by the troublemakers, and worse than that it would be wickedly unfair to the thousands of black people living thoroughly decent family lives as an integral part of this nation of ours.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Hear, hear.

Sir Ian Percival: I am glad to hear that the hon. Lady approves of that. She might not like my other points as much.

My first "do" is that every one of us ought to give total support to the police. They are the thin and only line standing between us and these evils. They do so with courage, skill, patience and dedication. Of course they are not all perfect—which of us is? Of course they must be accountable, and to their undying credit they readily accept that. Indeed, I do not know of any group more anxious and active to find its rotten apples and to get rid of them.

Of course, the need to fight what I have been talking about has increased the difficulty of the police in controlling ordinary crime, and they have attracted more criticism for that. If anybody ever doubted the seriousness of the problem or of what the police are now called upon to do, he should think again and again on the recent troubles at Brixton, Handsworth and Tottenham, not in general terms, but reminding himself of the atrocities that were actually commited in those places in the past four or five weeks.

It is worth reminding ourselves also of what happened at our conference in Blackpool, which shows us the pass to which we have come. We were exercising the most fundamental right of democracy to meet and talk. That is the very essence of democracy. But the Conservative party could not do it without hundreds of police officers to protect it. It brought home to those who were there, and particlarly vividly to me—more than I had appreciated before—what a terrible task the police have, and what a wonderful job they do. I am glad to pay my tribute to all the police officers who were in Blackpool, not just for the wonderful job that they did, but for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness when they must have wished us anywhere else. That is much more typical of the policing of this country from one end to the other than the selective stories that we have heard in this debate.

My second "do" is do let us remind ourselves over and again that crime is crime. Yes, there are serious problems to be solved, about the nature of which the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) and others have spoken. It should be no surprise to hon. Members to know that I happen to think that the people who suffer from those problems have much more chance of finding the solution under my Government than under any other Government. But that is another matter.

The nature of the crimes that we have experienced in recent weeks cannot be explained away as due to, much less excused because of, bad conditions or unemployment. That is an insult to the millions who suffer one or other, but yet maintain their honesty, very often better than many who are better off than they are.

It is totally unacceptable for anybody, much less a political leader, to say of such savagery as was committed in Tottenham:

"The police were given a bloody good hiding. They deserved it."

If there is no way of dealing with that sort of thing now, perhaps we should think of introducing some way.

[Sir Ian Percival]

My third and last "do" is this. The time has come when we must all be prepared to be involved, not by taking the law into our hands, nor yet just by talking, but by giving active support to those who have the duty of enforcing law and order and of protecting us.

There must be many people knowingly shielding the villains of Handsworth and Tottenham.

Ms. Clare Short: What does the right hon. and learned Gentleman mean?

Sir Ian Percival: I mean what I say. There must be many people who know the people who committed the crimes there, but who will not come forward and give evidence. They are thus shielding villains—villains so evil as to use children to commit their filthy crimes. They are doing this either because they want to shield such people, or because they are too frightened to come forward and help.

I am a fan of western films. In many of those films there comes a moment when the townsfolk realise that they have to stop telling the sheriff that he is paid to do the job and give him a hand in doing it, even at the risk of personal danger to themselves. I believe that that moment has come for us and our country.

8.34 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made a powerful case for a judicial inquiry covering a very wide range of topics. The point on which he failed to convince me was that anything very much would happen if such an inquiry took place and clear recommendations emerged from it.

After all, Lord Scarman conducted a major inquiry into the disorders of 1981. As the right hon. Member for Gorton reminded us, Lord Scarman made it quite clear that the root causes of the disorders were to be found in social problems. The report states:

"while good policing can help diminish tension and avoid disorder, it cannot remove the causes of social stress where these are to be found, as those in Brixton and elsewhere are, deeply embedded in fundamental economic and social conditions".

I think that few people would disagree that very little has improved since then. The conditions about which Lord Scarman spoke in 1981 are certainly no better, and in many cases they are a good deal worse. That is why Lord Scarman's recommendations went far wider than issues of public order and policing.

Ironically, most of Lord Scarman's recommendations on policing and public order have been acted upon in full or in part, but all too many of his recommendations on social issues are still collecting dust on departmental shelves.

On education, for example, Lord Scarman called for more places for the under-fives in inner city areas, more training for teachers in the needs of ethnic minority children and improved English teaching for those children. He also called for much closer links between schools and parents in the inner cities. So far as I can discover, however, the only response from the Department of Education and Science has been the publication of two consultative documents. There has been no positive action to encourage developments of that kind in the inner cities, and the resources that inner city education authorities need to undertake such an imaginative approach to the education needs there have certainly not been forthcoming.

On housing, Lord Scarman called for a major rehabilitation programme. All hon. Members who represent inner city constituencies know how desperately that is needed. We all have experience of the appalling run-down council estates where the lifts do not work, where the walls are covered with graffiti, where many flats are boarded up and where those still inhabited are riddled with damp and condensation. We all know the picture. One of the most interesting descriptions of that type of experience came from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who, on 26 February this year, said:

"It is only when you visit these areas . . . that you begin to wonder how it is possible that people are able to live in such inhuman conditions."

If we are talking about the problems of the inner cities, we must focus on those housing issues.

Another interesting recommendation by Lord Scarman was that the major rehabilitation programme for inner city housing should involve tenants and local people, and he was absolutely right. We all have experience of councils undertaking ill-thought-out so-called improvement schemes without consulting the tenants, when very often the people who know best how to improve life on a council estate are those who live there 24 hours a day.

What has been done in the four years or so since Lord Scarman reported? Additional resources have certainly not been provided for housing in the inner cities. As we all know, capital allocations have been substantially cut and the inner cities have suffered more than most from the reductions. When we put these points to Ministers they acknowledge the problems of the rundown council estates, but they seem to pin all their faith on the ability of privatisation to solve the problems. They seem to believe that private developers will miraculously come along, rather like the marines, to improve rundown council estates and to restore them to an acceptable condition. I accept that there are some good examples of private developers improving unpopular council estates, but they are drops in the ocean compared with the size of the problem that has to be faced. This is another major area where the Government have not lived up to Lord Scarman's recommendations.

The House will recall that Lord Scarman highlighted the problem of unemployment. We can all argue about the extent to which unemployment is an ingredient in the recipe of disorder, but surely we are all agreed that it plays a part. The size of the part we may debate, but we must all recognise that it is an important issue. That is exactly what Lord Scarman said. He reported that unemployment is

"a major factor in the complex pattern of conditions which lies at the root of the disorders in Brixton and elsewhere."

That is a clear judgment with which we can all agree.

Some interesting figures have been provided quite recently by the Department of the Comptroller and Auditor General which examines the impact of the urban programme. The figures show that between 1971 and 1981 unemployment in England and Wales rose from 5 per cent. to 9·6 per cent. However, unemployment in the Birmingham inner area rose in those years from 8·9 per cent. to 24·2 per cent. Over the same period, unemployment in Liverpool rose from 12·1 per cent. to 22·6 per cent. In the Manchester-Salford inner area it shot

up from 9·9 per cent. to 20·4 per cent. The Newcastle-Gateshead figures are 10·4 per cent. rising to 20 per cent. We all know that unemployment has become a hell of a lot worse since 1981. Most of us who know the inner cities can point to areas where unemployment is 25 per cent. or more. It is therefore a major cause of the problems that we are discussing.

It is understandable that Lord Scarman took the view that much of the unemployment problem was way beyond his scope. We must accept that. It will take a change in Government attitudes and policies seriously to tackle the unemployment problem. Lord Scarman suggested that help to set up black businesses would be of major assistance in alleviating the problem. Only now are we beginning to see one or two tentative movements in that direction in Handsworth and Deptford. Nothing like enough imagination is being shown on that score.

Irrespective of whether we get a public inquiry of the sort for which the Labour party is calling, the first priority must be to re-examine Lord Scarman's recommendations to see where they are still relevant and to ensure that they are implemented. Secondly, we need to reverse the damaging financial cuts which have caused so much unhappiness in inner city areas. I do not dispute that urban aid is welcome, even though there has been no detectable clear strategy behind the way in which urban aid grants have been made. However, as others have said, urban aid is subject to cuts. There has been a cut of 13 per cent. in real terms in urban aid over the past two years.

In any case, the benefit of urban aid is more than undermined by the cuts in rate support grant. Between 1979-80 and 1983-84, inner London gained £261 million from the urban aid programme, which was extremely welcome. However, over the same period it lost £865 million in reduced rate support grant. That was in addition to a sizeable chunk of the £791 million which London lost in housing subsidies. Manchester gained £2 million between 1980-81 and 1983-84 from the urban aid programme, but it lost £21 million in housing subsidies and £36 million in RSG. The Government's policy of giving something with one hand while taking a great deal more away with the other is a major cause of our inner city problems.

The Audit Commission recently observed that operating on out-of-date rateable values has been a major problem for the old and decaying industrial areas in our inner cities. In the view of the commission, Government grants for cities such as Liverpool and Sheffield would be about £15 million more in each case if we were operating on up-to-date rateable values. For an inner London borough, such as Lambeth, the loss would be of the order of £10 million because of working on out-of-date rateable values.

We need to concentrate spending on the needy, depressed, inner areas, but I take clearly the Home Secretary's point that we have to get value for money. I accept that not all the spending that we have undertaken in the past has produced value for money. There again, Lord Scarman had interesting things to say. He said that we needed a co-ordinated approach by Government, not the sort of situation that we have in London where the Department of Health and Social Security is busy running down the Health Service, closing hospitals and reducing the standards of health care at the same time as we are trying to tackle problems of deprivation. We need not only to co-ordinate the approach, but to involve local people. If we are to have developments of which people can feel proud and in which they can feel involved, we must have the participation of those local people right from the start.

We need to do much more to develop public-private partnerships, with public authorities, whether Government or local, developing partnership schemes with private enterprise. That is the only way in which we are going to regenerate our old, inner urban areas and create new jobs.

There are some good examples. The docklands scheme is one of them. But we are not doing anything like enough. We need a great deal more imagination in that area.

On the basis of my experience, I suggest to the House that there is a great deal of despair, frustration and downright cynicism in the inner cities. The comment that I hear most frequently from my constituents is that nobody cares. "Look at the state of the place," they say, "nobody cares about us." If we are to tackle that feeling of despair and exclusion, it will take a good deal more than a wide-ranging public inquiry. It is going to need swift, effective action that people can see on the ground. Sadly, I detect very few signs that we will get it from this Government.

8.46 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Many people want to take part in this short but important debate, although from much of what we have heard one would think that it was a debate about the police and that the police were more or less on trial. The problem is not so much whether the police are on trial; it is the people of this country who are virtually on trial over what they see as the important problems that we all face.

It is no good going back and asking whether we should have let great and growing ethnic minority groups come into this country. That is in the past. It is a sterile debate. People are here who were not of the ethnic majority's persuasion but they are here and they have come into many of the cities for obvious reasons. Birmingham is one of those cities. It is not sensible to talk about people going home, wherever home may be, and to forget that for many people this is their home. It is no good telling those first-generation British people to go home, because they are home. My family came from France 250 years ago. To me, the idea of going home to France is appalling. I do not even care much for the French. I look upon myself very much as a Birmingham man.

People say things which damage the chances of our all solving the problem. Having said, however, that we must accept ethnic minorities, as we do willingly, because they are here, I think that many people play on being part of an ethnic minority. If they are not willing to be absorbed, they ought surely to be genuinely involved in the host community. If we are not careful, people will come to look upon themselves in the end as having ethnic majority groups and other bizarre ideas. We have to be willing to live together and mix together.

How is that to be done? In what has happened in Birmingham, in Bradford, in Leicester or in parts of London, the great difficulty is the vast problems that previous generations have left to us all. Once good and gracious homes are now slums. Those of us who have been involved in public life for a number of years have seen jerry-built homes that have become slums in the lifetime of many hon. Members. I could take hon. Members to flats and houses in Birmingham that were built in the past 30 years and have become bigger slums than some of the Victorian homes in which people are still living.

[Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark]

It is no good simply saying that the problem is a matter of policing. His Royal Highness Prince Charles told an oddball architect, Mr. Rod Hackney, whom, we are told, secretly dined with the Prince, that he is concerned. We are all concerned. It is not the job of the Prince to say that he is compiling a report and that he will cut through the red tape. His Royal Highness does not help by saying that he is going to run this country. He will not inherit anything if he thinks that he will cut through the red tape.

We must bring home to people the problems that we face as elected representatives. I believe that a report that is due out soon will show that £20 billion needs to be spent on renovation to bring homes up to standard. We all have to face that fact. We cannot put it to one side and say that we shall deal with it tomorrow. With each day, each week and each year that passes, the cost of £20 billion will grow.

Too many people have spoken about violence. I leave that to those who are expert on the police and on the motives behind the violence. I speak about some of the other problems that people face. It is no good reducing the problems to blaming a Conservative Government or a Labour Government. There has been a natural pulling apart of this country from one generation to another, certainly since the war. The south has got better and richer, and the midlands and north have got worse and poorer. The reasons include the changing techniques of industry and the developing motorways system, but it is a fact.

It would be good for the south and particularly good for the midlands and the north, including cities such as Liverpool, if the Government stopped the encroachment on the green belt. Even in Birmingham people talk about silicon valleys being built in some of the few green areas left between Coventry and Birmingham. They forget that there are hundreds of derelict acres all around.

The Government should try to sweep away those derelict areas and give people a chance of building businesses and homes where there is the land and the need. Why do we go on giving in to builders who always want to build where it is easy? Why do we always give building permission in the south of England? Builders will always go where building is easy.

If Governments have any chance, it is in the inner areas. We should sweep away the derelict areas and make them better. I have seen it done in Birmingham and I urge the Government at least to make sure that, if we cannot narrow the divide between the south and the rest, it does not get worse.

I do not support the idea of another commission, whether under Saint Scarman, Saint Bob Geldof or any of the other people who become fads of the day. We do not need a wise man, however wise he may be, ferreting among the facts. We are here to face the problems, and we know what those problems are. Questions should be asked. In New York and Chicago, areas known to me and to other hon. Members, where they have worse housing and unemployment, they manage to do something about ethnic clashes. We should examine what happens there. Why can New York get 20 per cent. coloured policemen and we can get only 1 per cent. or 1·5 per cent.?

We can all learn something; the West Indians and the ethnic British should take note of the wonderful way in which Asian and Jewish families in the main look after and understand their own families. In faiths and religions where people respect their families and have a sense of self-discipline, there are not riots and problems. Families, black or white, who abandon their old and their young tend to get into disputes.

We do not want one report after another. We know the problem. Those of us who represent cities see the decay as we walk through them. We have to make not a cruel but a calculated decision: are we to let the inner cities decay? If we are not, the country has to make a decision. My decision would be for homes, renovation and the future of the people and not for cuts in taxation.

8.56 pm

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): About 15 years ago, in a report that was submitted by me to the then Minister for Housing and Local Government before the Department of the Environment came into existence, the following words were used:

> "The hearts of our cities are sick. If something is not done soon in Government and local government and in other institutions to cure that sickness the whole of our society will become ill."

That report was produced in 1970. It is now 1985.

Since 1970 there has been report after report, and there have been inquiries and inner city studies. The largest range of studies into inner city problems centred on Birmingham, Liverpool and London. Action was taken as part of the studies. They were not paper exercises. Then there was the Scarman report of 1981. In 1982 an inquiry by the Select Committee on the Environment began into what had taken place since the inner city studies and the Scarman report of 1981. That investigation was interrupted by the 1983 general election and was not taken up again.

One thing became clear during that unfinished investigation which I chaired—that, apart from policing, the major recommendations of Scarman with regard to co-ordinating Government and local government departments and actions — concerting and integrating policies and departments to tackle urban renewal in inner city areas —had not been acted upon.

I have in my hand some correspondence which, as chairman, I had then with Ministers. I am glad to see that one of those Ministers has come into the Chamber. This is correspondence that I had on behalf of the committee with the Secretaries of State for Employment, the Environment, Education and Science, Trade and Industry and Social Services on the basis of the Scarman recommendation. We sought to find out what had happened apart from words inside Government Departments. Although much may have been happening, nothing—I choose my words advisedly—had happened to implement the recommendation of Lord Scarman on co-ordinating and concerting Government action. I am quite prepared to send to each Minister copies of this correspondence which took place from 1982 to 1983. I will ask them the same questions as we asked then. At that time we did not get satisfactory answers and unfortunately we could not pursue the matter because the election brought an end to that inquiry.

The Minister, who has left us for a short while, ended his remarks in the same way as he ended some of his answers to questions on Monday, by saying that we should not sweep this debate aside but had to learn the lessons and start acting upon them. We said that time and time again in 1981. Members of all political parties have been

uttering similar words about inner cities or what we now call inner city problems for many years, but little has been done effectively to carry out what Lord Scarman and others like him recommended.

The first lesson is to bring back to the inner cities the resources which this Government removed. Those resources were inadequate in 1979. The Government cannot keep on talking pious language about the problems of homeless families in their thousands, of decaying houses and decaying estates, and then go away and not be prepared to put in the resources to deal with those problems.

That sort of action does not require a major investigation or a great deal of thought. There should be action not only on housing but on hospitals, schools, colleges and the environment. That is going to cost money, and over the last five or six years this Government have removed thousands of millions of pounds from those areas. Little has been done about Scarman. In the wake of the horror that we have experienced in recent weeks, even though it is four or five years after Scarman, at least the Government should take decisions now to do something. But what have we got? We have an exercise going on in Government about whether they are going to cut expenditure or somehow, perhaps, hold it at its present reduced level.

The Government cannot have it both ways. It has to be said bluntly and rudely that to do that is sheer hypocrisy. The Government are lying to the House, to the country and to the people of Tottenham, Handsworth and Liverpool and to people in all the other major cities where we have yet to experience—one says this fearfully—the worst. We have already experienced that in some of our towns. The Government cannot keep saying, "We have to do something about it. We have to be imaginative," when at the same time they are taking away resources and debating this week whether more resources will be taken away or perhaps, if we are lucky, they will keep the level of resources as it is. Perhaps we will get the odd £5 million to increase derelict land grant, but there are hundreds of such schemes in town halls and the Department of the Environment which would stimulate private investment. The Department knows that. It knows that that one area of expenditure alone could bring in millions of pounds of private finance if the Department were prepared radically to increase that budget heading.

It is not enough to put more money back in. I return to the point that Scarman rammed home and which everybody has busily quoted since but done little about. It is how the money is spent—the methods employed by the Government, local authorities and major financial institutions which should be involved in inner cities. Ministers know that Scarman's central recommendation on social policy and administrative policy has not been dealt with. Nearly five years have passed and nothing has been done. I have it on record in these documents and others which have been published and in answers to oral questions.

Unless the Government are prepared to set an example by establishing a genuinely integrated machinery for the renewal of whole areas of our cities—to emulate what was done in the new towns and in some of the expanded towns such as Swindon and Wilmslow and what has been started with the Glasgow eastern area renewal scheme—to turn inner city renewal programmes into effective policies, we shall argue about this matter in five years' time, more horrors having taken place.

It is not enough to get a nice kindly response tonight or any other night. We must pursue what we started in the Select Committee. We must probe what is going on inside government, expose the failures and make recommendations which the House can press on the Government. If we do not do that we shall have more horrors. It is not a case of having a partisan battle. No party can claim to have tackled urban renewal as it should have been tackled. No party can claim to have all of the answers, but we cannot wait until we have all the answers and all the understanding—we shall never get there. We must do something now about renewing our cities and be prepared to put resources into them. The first step should be the restoration of at least the £2 billion which has been taken out in the past five years.

It is a shame and a disgrace that the Home Secretary had to be the Minister who led on this debate. I am not being flippant. The matter does not really lie with the Home Office. The Government should have brought forward the debate themselves and given the responsibility to one of two Ministers; either the Prime Minister, who does not appear to give a damn about what is going on in the innards of our cities, or the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is supposed to be the lead Minister. God knows what he is leading. Nothing. We must have action, not because we want partisan battles and the opportunity to build up for another big debate to knock ourselves around but because unless something is done, society will fall apart. It is as serious as that.

9.10 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): In our national life there are occasions when one brutal and dramatic tragedy comes leaping out of the headlines and shakes the whole nation to its core. Such an occasion was the riot at Broadwater Farm. I went to the constituency of the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) with the police. Having seen, sadly, a number of riots, both in this country and in northern Ireland, what distinguished Tottenham from all that had gone before was that guns and machetes were used in an English city against the police by rioters, that a police officer was hacked to death, that an army of liquor and perhaps drug-crazed youths held themselves against the police lines in a semi-organised fashion and, finally, that some local councillors afterwards refused to condemn this.

These new and, to me, quite terrifying elements demand that every one of us in public life should stop looking to the conventional wisdom of judicial inquiries and—the new buzz word—"community policing" to restore peace in our cities. Instead we need to face squarely the appalling truth that, unless steps are taken now to help the police to deal more effectively with riots—that is, with fewer casualties to themselves and with less looting and burning of their neighbourhoods—our country will find itself on the road to urban anarchy.

In this context I welcome, as did the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) the lead that the Prime Minister gave in Blackpool. I am glad, as he was, to quote her words precisely. She said:

"If the police need more men, more equipment, different equipment, they shall have them. We do not economise on protecting life and property."

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

I do not think that these words represent quite a blank cheque, as *The Times* described it. However, they mean that if the police can demonstrate to the satisfaction of my right hon. Friend that to uphold the law and to maintain the Queen's peace they need more resources than are at present available to them, the Government as a whole, including my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will ask this House to provide them. I propose, therefore, to set out in my speech a shopping list of police needs, to which I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister of State who is to reply will be able to respond positively.

Before doing so, I want to make three comments about what I saw on the Broadwater estate. First, it is a travesty to suggest that all the burning, looting and murder were no more than a spontaneous reaction to the death of Mrs. Jarrett. They were no such thing. Long before that incident —indeed, while the admirable Dolly Kiffin was away in Jamaica on holiday—drug traffickers had moved on to that estate. So had a number—I cannot put a figure to it — of what I can only describe as militant insurrectionaries.

In the 10 days before the incident, hundreds of milk bottles had been stolen. Many of them had been filled with petrol and at least two had been thrown off a high building to test whether they would work. There were also several incidents of attacks on the police in the week preceding Mrs. Jarrett's heart attack. I do not say—it would be mad to say it—that the violence was pre-planned. I do say, on the advice of the police who were there, that there is significant evidence of some organisation and, at the time of the rioting, of some measure of control.

My second point about that riot is that a majority of the ordinary people in the estate and the surrounding streets were, if anything, glad to see the police. Having knocked on several doors and talked to several people, black as well as brown and white, I was impressed by what they said about having been subjected for many years to something close to a reign of terror. They claimed that what one of them described as "rat-packs" of youngsters had been assaulting people, damaging property and exchanging drugs regularly. Many elderly people, black as well as brown and white, were frightened. Many told me that they were glad to see the police, and criticised them—rightly in my view—for having held back too long in tackling the problem of crime and drugs in the area.

My third point must touch upon Mr. Bernie Grant. He refused to condemn the rioters and even suggested:

"Maybe it was a policeman who stabbed another policeman."

By that single terrible remark, although he has since tried to obfuscate it, Mr. Grant has proved himself unfit for public office. It is no good asking him to resign. The Leader of the Opposition has made his position clear on that. On behalf of the police I want to say that the name of PC Keith Blakelock, who met his death while protecting the lives of others on Broadwater Farm, will be remembered by the ordinary people of Haringey long after Mr. Bernie Grant has faded into oblivion.

Unfortunately, Mr. Grant is not alone in his attacks on the police. Indeed, the police in general and the Metropolitan police in particular have been subjected over the past few years to a politically motivated hate campaign. While the House was debating the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, some councils in London issued tens of thousands of leaflets portraying the police as racialists and oppressors. While the Committee on Safety of Medicines was debating whether to allow Depo Provera, a new contraceptive jab, to be available through the National Health Service, certain women's organisations, partly financed by the ratepayers of London, put out pamphlets suggesting that white doctors, backed by the police, would use it

"to solve the immigrant problem by rendering black females infertile."

Other militants daubed areas of south London with propaganda that claimed falsely that it was the police who set fire to the house in New Cross where some black youngsters were burned.

Against that background, is it any wonder that some young black people were conditioned by such political extremism into hating the police? I make this charge—that those who, for their own reasons, cynically and deliberately stirred up hatred against the police were accessories to the manufacture of petrol bombs and accomplices to the arson and looting, and murder of a police officer on the Broadwater estate.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I do not give way. I want to be brief as others wish to speak.

The first point in my shopping list concerns manpower. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will accept this. In my judgment, the police need more men. Nationally, they require about 6,000 extra police officers, of whom approximately 3,000 more need to be in London. I recognise that the Government have honoured their commitment to maintain the Edmund-Davies pay standards and that as a result there has been a substantial increase in police manpower since 1978. The increase must be seen against a background of an enormous growth in police commitment, including crime, to which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary referred, and severe restrictions in overtime and recruiting that have been imposed by some local authorities.

I wish to refer my right hon. Friend to the monthly return of strengths and vacancies in police forces as at 31 July this year. Greater Manchester has suffered a reduction of 176 officers since the beginning of 1984. Merseyside shows a net loss of 23 officers in the same period, west Yorkshire 110 and the west Midlands 152. The worst affected force is the Metropolitan police. Since 1979, its book strength has increased but, unfortunately, there has been a shift of emphasis which has reduced the number of police officers on the streets.

I believe it right to give my right hon. Friend the reasons for that. The new royalty and diplomatic protection department has been established, taking 700 officers, and the introduction of the district support unit has taken 750 more officers. There has been a loss of regular working on rest days which has reduced the force by 1,200 officers. A reduction in overtime hours has reduced the force by 1,300 officers. The cash limits on overtime imposed this year reduced the effective street manpower by a further 833 officers. The result is that the police do not have the manpower in London to contain riots on the scale that we are discussing, and at the same time to discharge all the other duties that the House lays upon them. That is why I say to my right hon. Friend that if he wishes to deal with the riots he must address himself

to the issue of police manpower. I hope that he will go to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor with the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and see that there is a net increase in available manpower in our large cities.

I wish to conclude with a word about community policing. Of course the police should operate, as far as they can, by consent. They must be accountable, and indeed they are accountable, to the law, their chief officers, the discipline code and the independent Police Complaints Authority.

It is deception to believe that, when riots and picketing of the kind we saw earlier this year are happening, somehow the bobby on the beat — "Dixon of Dock Green" — can cope with the challenge to him. The police response to the kind of problems that we face today must be an arsenal of different responses at different levels. It is the rioter and the criminal who will set the level of police response.

No one can deny that community policing has its place, but I hope that my right hon. Friend and all Members of the House will not assume that that buzz word is the solution to our problem. It is not. The police need support, manpower and equipment. Above all, they require an understanding of their duties and the backing of all parties on both sides of the House.

9.24 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): We are on narrow ground in this debate — narrow in respect of time and narrow in respect of the subject marked out by the motion. Those outside may have been surprised that the usual channels managed to limit to so short a space a subject which bulks so large in the minds of the people of this country.

We are invited to demand an independent judicial inquiry. I do not believe that that is what we need. I believe what we need is for those who are in office, who are in positions of authority and responsibility, to acknowledge the truths — some of them appalling, some of them embarrassing — which are known and understood by the people who live in those cities. I mean no disrespect to the judiciary when I say that I fear that an independent judicial inquiry might make it easier rather than harder for those truths to continue to be evaded as they have successfully been so far.

On 20 September, immediately after the events in Handsworth, I addressed two questions to the Prime Minister. They are questions which have not yet been answered, but which will have to be answered. In that speech, I again referred to the projection, in my view irrefutable, that in the foreseeable future not less than one third of the population of inner London will be new Commonwealth and Pakistan ethnic, and that this will apply to major cities throughout the length and breadth of England. I asked the Prime Minister whether she accepted that projection. If she accepted it, or if she replaced it by an alternative which she regarded as more accurate, what sort of a Britain, and what sort of a London, did she believe there would be?

I do not complain that I received no instantaneous reply. At the time, the Prime Minister was in Amman, engaged in seeking to bring peace to another troubled area of the world. I took it as a courtesy — it was perhaps also wisdom on her part — that she did not attempt to answer off the cuff. But the answer is still outstanding. What I cannot believe is that when a challenge of that sort is addressed to the Prime Minister, advice upon the answer to it is not obtained by the officials concerned. Nor can I believe that if the advice obtained was adverse to the proposition I put to the Prime Minister, that answer would not have been given speedily and with maximum publicity. Indeed, there are all kinds of people in possession of the relevant facts who, had they been disposed or able to challenge my projection, would have been only too delighted to do so.

I suspect that the answer the Prime Minister got was not just that she could not challenge my projection. The answer she more probably got was that the true projection was higher than the one which I had put to her and that, therefore, she would be wise to leave it alone.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) drew attention to the profound change that has taken place in the composition of the population in inner London, in his city and mine, and in other cities. He did not draw attention to the fact that this phenomenon is not static, but dynamic. It marches on. What we have seen so far in terms of the transformation of the population, like what we have seen so far in terms of urban violence, is nothing to what we know is to come. This knowledge, which is not hidden from ordinary people who live in those places, overshadows those cities and inner London.

What is to be done? The first thing to be done is that the people on the Front Bench — members of the Government — must admit the facts. They must come before the people of this country and say, "You are not just facing" — as the hon. Member for Selly Oak invited us to face — "the existing situation; you are facing a further transformation of which the present has given you relatively little notion." Having said that, the Government must answer the second question that I addressed to the Prime Minister: if that is the transformation which she is unable to deny lies ahead, what sort of a Britain does she think it will be?

We do not require judicial inquiries. We require truthfulness and honesty from those who sit in the seats of power. That is what the people of this country want. They have been cheated of it so far, but in the end they will have it.

9.29 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): The rejection of the mores of our society expressed as inner city violence has implications that are far too grave for the partisan point scoring that we have heard from some Labour Members. There should be no disagreement in this fount of democracy about the fact that the police — the protectors of our freedom — have a right to expect from us unequivocal support for them in the execution of their lawful duties, just as we have the right to expect from them continuing courage, tolerance, fairness and the use of the minimum force necessary.

Much has been said about the deprivation in areas in which the riots have occurred. Equally, it has been pointed out that much has been and is being done. Certainly, those who feel rejected by society will tend to reject the rules of that society. Consequently, a decayed environment, poor employment prospects, drugs and a feeling of being seen to belong to a sub-class because of colour will provoke alienation. At times, this alienation has been enhanced by a few heavy-handed or racially prejudiced

[Mr. Jonathan Sayeed]

police, and to ignore that is to do a considerable disservice to our otherwise superb police forces. At times, this alienation has been entrenched through those apologists for crime who are too embarrassed to admit that there are bad blacks just as there are bad whites. All too frequently, these sores of disadvantage are further infected by those who, for financial gain through crime or political advantage through mayhem, hope to manipulate understandable complaint into vicious carnage.

Environment, unemployment and colour alone do not explain why the riots have been confined to areas that are predominantly black, for do not those from the Indian sub-continent suffer the same disadvantages? Perhaps there is something culturally different—I introduce this subject with some diffidence—that explains this phenomenon and explains why Asians argue when West Indians would fight. While those from the Indian sub-continent set great store by education and, despite difficulties, build trading empires, I cannot name one equivalent West Indian concern.

If cultural differences are a partial explanation of why a minority of blacks find difficulty in sharing our majority values, then to make black ghettos of our inner cities only enhances the lack of shared values and encourages a different set of standards to those the majority hold.

If black people are to be convinced that this country is their country, all levels of Government must do all they can to encourage black people to disperse throughout the country so that every black person can learn that it is in his adherence to our values that his greatest opportunities lie.

9.33 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The public will find it difficult to understand, when they realise tomorrow that, after next Tuesday, the House of Commons will not sit for a whole week, that hon. Members have been given less than three hours to debate this crucial subject. There is no reason why Parliament, instead of proroguing next Wednesday, could not prorogue next Thursday so that we could have a full day's debate on this important issue. It is within the Government's gift to make that arrangement.

I regret the Home Secretary's speech. I would have expected that speech from his predecessor, and I think that the right hon. Gentleman will come to regret making it. We shall pursue him about his remarks on Birmingham. He cannot make such an allegation without giving the specifics, given the record of the present Birmingham city council.

By and large, inner-city life is unknown to Conservative Members. The honourable exception tonight was the only speech that really got to the meat of this debate, which came from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). Visiting an inner-city area, as many hon. Members have, is not the same as living inside it. It is not enough to go on a day trip to an area that has suffered from a disturbance to understand the issues. The areas are microcosms of economic decline, deprivation, and disintegration—factors that are found in many areas in the United Kingdom.

Our local and national government structures are not adequate to deal with the problem. All that those who live in the inner cities demand is that they have a quality of life—however measured—and a standard of employment, housing, health care, mortality rate and perinatal mortality rate that is at least equal to the average of their fellow citizens in the rest of the United Kingdom. We have to bring about structures in government and set up organisations and posts whose task is to raise the quality of life in inner city areas to at least that level.

We have to find out why there are differences between inner cities and other areas and why there are differences between the mass unemployment of today and that of the 1930s. A beginning towards that is an overall judicial review, as called for by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

Only a small part of my constituency is affected by the troubles in Birmingham. Indeed, they affected a small part of three constituencies—those of Ladywood, Small Heath and Perry Barr. In the Handsworth-Lozells-Soho corner of Birmingham, where 56,000 people live, we are told that 300 people rioted. We know from the addresses given to the courts that a vast number of those people were not local but came from way outside the area.

The people of the area want to restore it. The post office reopened last week in a chemist's shop. Only yesterday, the new market started to operate. Many traders lost out. Some 39 shops were burnt out in a stretch of road no more than 200 yards long. Little damage was done to homes—only four were damaged. The people are determined to rebuild their lives and their community, which were so badly devastated on the night of Monday 9 September.

It is invidious to mention names, but I want to pay tribute to two people. I have to single out the elected chairman of the Lozells trading association. Many people sought to divide those traders on ethnic grounds. They are a mixture. The oldest trader in the street is white and has been there for over 36 years. There are also Afro-Caribbeans and Asians and they did not have an organisation before the troubles. They now have one, and I pay tribute to its chairman, Basil Clarke, for the tireless effort that he has put in to help the traders whose premises disappeared overnight and to ensure that they continue to want to trade, stay in business and serve the community rather than disappear to other parts of the country, which it would be easy and understandable for them to do. Mr. Clarke has shown remarkable leadership and organisational skills in the past few weeks. As many have before, he has come up against all the inadequacies of the Riot (Damages) Act, to which I referred on Monday when I questioned the Home Secretary about his statement.

Another problem is the inadequacies of insurance companies when the Riot (Damages) Act is brought into operation, because they want the Government and the public purse to pick up the tab. Only one person in that area has received any help from his insurance company—the rest are just standing on the side hoping that the Home Office and the county council will pick up the tab. However, the Riot (Damages) Act does not cover anything like the damage that took place. It does not include consequential loss, damage to vehicles or many of the other losses that people suffered.

The other person whom I have to mention is Dick Knowles, the leader of the city council, who has responded to the problem and has seen to it that his council has responded to it in the best traditions of local government.

He knows when something is right or wrong and has said what he thinks. For that, he deserves our thanks and those of my constituents and the rest of Birmingham.

However, Birmingham city council is under attack from the Government. The councillors have fought with great courage to defend jobs and services, and to do that —not to increase them—it has had to put up the rates by 43 per cent. this year. Not for them the ranting at mass public meetings but the courage to try to put back the resources taken away by the Government, as the figures given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton show. They have had to set up their own inquiry to try to find out what really happened on Monday 9 September and Tuesday 10 September when the Home Secretary visited the area.

My constituents, like those of many of my colleagues, suffer from the obscenity of unemployment. It is now creeping into the stockbroker belts and we are beginning to hear a few whinges from Conservative Members, but it cannot be denied that mass unemployment has been used as a major tool of economic policy. It has been used to curb incomes — in the past four years we have had an incomes policy born out of mass unemployment—and it has been used to curb the power of working people to defend and advance themselves. But just as not all those arrested for crime are the same colour, not all are unemployed. That is clear from the jobs and occupations that have been stated.

Nor do I suppose for one moment that every rioter was a drug user or pusher, but just as drugs are used as currency in our prisons as a price to be collected when it is thought appropriate, what happened on the streets of my constituency and those of my colleagues this year in respect of cocaine and heroin cannot be divorced from what happened on 9 September. And if there is any humming and hah-ing about what I have said about the prisons, let the Minister do as I did at 7 o'clock last Friday morning and spend a couple of hours with the prison officers at Winson Green to get the facts of the situation. It cannot be claimed, however, that throwing petrol bombs and fighting firemen is fighting unemployment. That is unacceptable to everyone and it is simply not true.

In many cities in this country there are big empty barrels making a lot of noise as community leaders but the people say that those people are not their leaders because they did not elect them. There must be a review of all the organisations and operations, whether they be in local government, community relations councils or elsewhere, to give people confidence that there are enough people from the various religious and ethnic backgrounds, and so on, to speak up for them and to exercise genuine leadership born of the ballot box.

Community policing has been mentioned. When I drive through central London and see a policeman or traffic warden walk past a Rolls-Royce parked on a double yellow line, I suppose that that is community policing. Every hon. Member must have seen that kind of community policing. Community policing should not turn a blind eye to crime. Community policing certainly failed my constituents and those of my colleagues on 9 September. Indeed, policing of any kind failed our constituents. If that were not so, the Riot (Damages) Act would not now be in operation.

My constituents will not tolerate the seeking of scapegoats among the local superintendents. Both Superintendent Love and Superintendent Burton care about the area that they police and about their officers. They come to virtually every public meeting that I and my colleagues attend, whatever the time and however short the notice, and they must not be made scapegoats. The police cannot solve the problems of inner urban decay and the social conditions that we have allowed to come about in this country.

Money schemes for the inner cities must certainly be considered by the Home Secretary, but the money must stay in the area to create employment for local people. Nothing is more upsetting than visiting people whose homes are being done up and made to look nice under the envelope schemes by outside contractors when the skills are available in those very houses to carry out the work. Urgent action must be taken. I know that that will mean cutting across normal arrangements, but allowances must be made for that.

Time is not on our side. If anyone wants confirmation of that, it is necessary only to read the reported words of the heir to the throne today. The inner cities are areas of tension, poverty and decline but there is a vibrancy of life within them which is missing from the outer suburbs. I feel sorry for some of my outer suburb constituents because they do not experience the joyful aspects of inner city life. There is a greater attendance for religious worship in our inner city areas than in the outer suburbs. I speak for a constituency within a large city and not for rural areas.

We shall utterly fail those we have the privilege to represent if we do not condemn arson, looting, murder and rape. It is even worse if we wait to see the colour of those who have been arrested before we decide to speak. That is what happened after 9 September in Birmingham and my constituents know that that is so.

We owe our constituents the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the disturbances, and I am not satisfied so far that that will be made available so that we can ascertain how to prevent a recurrence of what has happened over the past few weeks. The passing of the motion is a way to begin to get at the truth.

9.42 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): On 9 and 10 October in my constituency there were riots, and with the pall of smoke there was a pall of sadness. So many people had spent so much time over the years to ensure that we did not have such a problem. In spite of so many efforts, that was the result.

I have the privilege of living in a constituency which has an inner city area but which stretches to the outside of the city. I hear members saying that the inner urban programme does not meet the demands of the inner areas. If we increase expenditure in the inner urban areas, how shall we contain the resentment that is being fuelled already on the council estates in the peripheries of our cities throughout the country? How shall we be able to answer the argument, "Why is it that so many areas in our inner cities are getting so much when we are getting so little?"

The rate support grant for Leicester this year is £14 million but the inner urban grant for a comparatively small area in the centre of the city is £5·5 million, which is about one third of the rate support grant. That additional money is being poured into a central area. More has been spent on housing grants for private houses in that central area over the past three years than ever before. There has been more spent on improving housing and transport and on

[Mr. Derek Spencer]

achieving a better standard of living for those who live within it than ever before. The only thing that has become worse is behaviour.

There are problems in our inner city areas because some of the money that is allocated to them is being misdirected. It is finding its way to organisations that are being used to foment our problems. It is being used to stir up the problems instead of solving them. Witness the Highfields and Belgrave law centre, which is funded by public money. This week it put out a pamphlet saying, "Stop the police harassment," alleging that the police, following the riots, were arresting only young Afro-Caribbeans. It is a scandalous lie. There is not a word of truth in it. The police are arresting those whom they have reason to believe have committed serious criminal offences and it is their plain and bounden duty to do just that, without fear or favour, without affection or ill will. When public money is being directed towards a law centre that is assisting in stirring up racial tension and disorder of this nature, it is a scandal.

It goes on to say that the police believe that all Afro-Caribbeans are thieves and muggers. How can we encourage people from the ethnic minorities to join the police force if poison of that sort is being injected into the body politic at public expense? The pamphlet continues without shame to say that if a person is in trouble or stopped by the police, he or she should see a solicitor, and it gives a number. The solicitor employed by this organisation is Mr. Keith Vass, the prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Leicester, East. That is the authentic voice of Socialism which those of us who have had experience of inner city politics, whether in Camden or Leicester, have heard at first hand all too often.

When I hear the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) ask what is the future in our inner cities, the future that I see is one where more people are united than divided, a future where what people have in common is greater than whan separates them. In Leicester, where 25 per cent. of my constituents are Asian, a huge sector of the economy has been built by Asians. It is owned by Asians. It is worked for by Asians. That is the future that we in Leicester face.

9.51 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Time is incredibly short for what ought to be a much longer debate on this most serious subject. I want to say a few words about the trigger events which I hope a judicial inquiry would look at. One of the questions which people are asking in the minority communities in particular is the degree to which the police, consciously or unconsciously, use different standards of behaviour for members of different communities. For instance, if a black man is driving a BMW he is likely to be a thief or a drug dealer. Is that the underlying assumption that the police make? Whereas if a white man is driving a BMW he is likely to be an official in the Department of Trade or a member of a respectable profession. That is what some people believe about the way the police behave. Another question is whether, if a black single parent had shot a policeman by mistake, the subsequent inquiry would be carried out with the delicacy and secrecy with which the present inquiry is being carried out.

These are the sort of questions that are being put. They demand answers, answers which should be given as part of an open inquiry, as my local consultative committee emphasised strongly in a letter to the Home Secretary.

The Home Secretary will be utterly failing in his duty if he thinks that the response to what has happened in Brixton, Handsworth and Haringey should be simply an increase in police power or a change in policing methods. The person who ought really to be replying to this debate tonight is the Prime Minister, so that she might explain the violent harvest of bitter fruit which she has sown over the past six years. It is impossible to divorce the catastrophic cuts in housing, the catastrophic increase in unemployment and the catastrophic cuts in all sorts of services in the constituency and borough that I represent from what has happened in that area, where deep hatred, disillusion, despair and alienation lie beneath the surface and are the cause of these riots.

If the Government do not recognise that, they will simply find that year after year the smouldering volcanoes of our inner cities will explode again in the face of a Government that seem to me neither to care about nor to understand at the highest level the causes of these problems.

9.54 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The House has had a frank and, at times, angry debate, but that is fully understood because of the enormity of the problems and crises that have affected some parts of our inner cities.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) started the contributions of those who have personal experience from their constituencies. I fully understand some of the points that he raised, but I must take issue with him when he says that the police are acceptable but goes on to describe their tactics in terms of legalised thuggery. We cannot do that, and we must recognise that fact.

However, I respect what the hon. Gentleman said about the independence of the Police Complaints Authority. We are determined to ensure that it works, to the betterment of inquiries and to the satisfaction of the public in the rebuilding of confidence.

I compliment my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) on stirring people to get involved in the rehabilitation that must take place. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) was right to say that there should be a re-examination of the Scarman report. I assure him that that is being done to ensure that every possible lesson is learnt from that, because we base our case significantly on the exposure given by that report to so many of the underlying causes that hon. Members on both sides have mentioned.

The right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) laid the responsibility firmly at the door of housing and I respect his views on that matter, but housing is only one of the many issues involved. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) reminded us in an extremely courageous speech that there are many facets to these problems. He was right to mention that it must not just be assumed that unemployment or colour are direct or contributing causes. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that of the 362 people arrested at Handsworth, 108 were white and 182 were Afro-Caribbean. The hon. Gentleman may know that 131 were employed and 182 were unemployed. In Brixton, 90

whites and 140 Afro-Caribbeans were arrested. Of those arrested, 106 were employed and 126 were unemployed. There are balances to be struck.

In Tottenham, the numbers charged were few, totalling 34, and three were white and 14 were Afro-Caribbean. Seven were local residents and 11 came from outside the area. People coming from outside were a feature of these events.

The events were horrendous and that is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has rightly said that this is not a time for a public judicial inquiry. It is a time for concerted action. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will recognise that the Opposition's call for a judicial inquiry typifies their view of events affecting public order. Last year, during the mining dispute, when public order was last under threat, the calls for an inquiry from Labour Members were continual, day in, day out, and were in contrast to the absence of condemnation of the defeat of public order that was nearly achieved by the NUM.

The rule of law is indivisible. It is no use trying to find some excuse for criminal behaviour. Excuses must not be found. Mitigating circumstances do not exist. We cannot condone or qualify culpability. That must be dealt with properly. The rule of law cannot be fudged and we cannot condone breaches in the interests of political considerations.

Our amendment stands four square for the maintenance of public order without qualification and four square behind the police in the execution of their duty. These are the same police who, night after night, sustained the right to work during the miners' strike, and, day after day, continued to serve the communities in which they were located. They are the same police who spend hour after hour surveying the drug trafficker and still get called out in the middle of the night to accidents, large or small.

The House adds almost monthly to the load of legislation on our police, yet they do not object — certainly not often. However, they do object when they are made the fall guys for the sins of others or when their operational independence and impartiality are threatened by political control. The clamour from the boroughs of Lambeth and Haringey is for more political control of the police.

In Britain today discipline is a dirty word. It has long since ebbed from millions of homes and it has been dragged from thousands of schools. The police stand as the main bastion of discipline and responsibility in our society. Our main task is to rebuild in the affected areas that confidence which all law-abiding citizens in Britain enjoy—peace under the rule of law. Our police will be in the van of that endeavour. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 292.

Division No. 298] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack

Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the crucial importance of the maintenance of public order; applauds the courage and dedication of the police and responsible community leaders in restoring order; and welcomes Her Majesty's Government's commitment to early effective action in the light of the recent urban disturbances.

Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland)

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I beg to move,

That the draft Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved

I am aware that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) was not happy about the circumstances surrounding the introduction of this measure when it was brought forward at the tail end of the last session.

I should like to make it clear that this came about simply because a slot presented itself for approving the order, which I am sure the House agrees is a sensible and urgently needed measure. I should like to thank the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) for his interest in this matter and for pressing for Northern Ireland legislation. I should like to reassure the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley that the shortened procedure will continue to be used only in exceptional circumstances when timing is an important consideration and the issue is likely to be non-controversial.

Following the complaints made last July the Government have reviewed the procedure and I can tell the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley that in future when the Secretary of State agrees to adopt the shortened procedure he will at that stage write to the Northern Ireland party leaders and Opposition spokesmen informing them of his decision and the reasons for it.

The purpose of this order is to provide powers under which the use of certain laser techniques in medicine or surgery, including cosmetic surgery, can be regulated. The order is needed because no such powers are available under existing legislation to control premises in which lasers are used for medical or surgical purposes.

The order will make it possible to regulate these techniques by bringing premises in which they are used within the definition of "nursing homes" in the Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. It will also empower the Department to specify the type of laser techniques which are to be controlled and to make regulations specifying the records to be kept about laser treatments. This order will bring the law in Northern Ireland into line with England and Wales.

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the use of lasers for the removal of tattoos. The stronger types of laser are potentially hazardous not only to the person on whom they are directed but also to the user and others nearby. They can suffer skin burns which may need plastic surgery and may even lead to blindness.

It is clear that there must be adequate protection. Those at risk are mainly young people who may wish to remove an unwanted tattoo, not realising what a problem it would be to get rid of it.

There has been understandable public disquiet in Northern Ireland about the absence of powers there to control laser use. The Government share this concern.

There is clearly a need for the powers in this order which will provide people in Northern Ireland with the same protection from inexperienced or incompetent laser practitioners as already exists in England and Wales. I commend the order to the House.

10.17 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May I take this opportunity to welcome the Under-Secretary of State to his position on the Government Front Bench? I trust that he will have an enjoyable stay there. We on these Benches will seek to provide him with opposition. I am sure that the Front Bench of the official Opposition join us in that welcome. Although the Minister has come down from the heights of the Back Benches to the lower reaches of the Front Bench, I trust that he has brought with him to the Front Bench the humour that he displayed on the Back Benches. If so, it will help our debating procedure.

I thank the Under-Secretary of State for his assurance that the shortened form will be used only in exceptional cases. I thank him in particular for the assurance that not just a title will be provided without an understanding of what is involved. It was not just its publication on 11 July that raised the hackles of the Ulster Unionists. The problem was that we did not know what it contained.

We take the view that as often as possible Northern Ireland legislation should be considered with the corresponding legislation for Great Britain. It was in that context that my attention was first drawn to this problem. In September 1984 I was approached by people in Northern Ireland and asked whether the legislation which was to come into force in Great Britain on 1 October 1984 applied to Northern Ireland. Therefore, I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State's predecessor in office. In September 1984 I was assured that this matter was being considered, but I was told that under the affirmative order procedure it might be 12 months before it was proceeded with and that they were not in a position to tell me when that might be.

The first we knew of the order was when it appeared on the Order Paper just before the recess. It took us by surprise. We objected in principle, as we have done consistently about the affirmative order procedure, especially when there is legislation that is applicable to Great Britain, which is relevant to Northern Ireland. We would much prefer it if the debates were held at the same time.

We welcome the order because it will affect tattooing. Historically, tattooing has been a form of cosmetic that has not always worked to the benefit of the recipient. In 1961, because of the dangers to health attached to tattooing, the New York State Department took action to restrict it. In my experience as a pastor, there have been moments when I have had grave difficulty in containing my humour. For example, a young couple came to get married, and he had engraved on his arm, "I love Mary", and the girl he was marrying was called Barbara. It causes a little upset. For that reason, some people like to change their tattoos.

In Northern Ireland we have another problem that has caused a little difficulty. Young enthusiasts are engraved with tattoos that tell people that they are either IRA or UVF. As they mature, they may not necessarily change their allegiance, but they are a little wiser and know that it is not the wisest thing to run around with such tattoos on their bodies, so they want to have them changed. It is the changing that causes particular problems.

I am given to believe that it is possible to pay up to £300 for treatment. Some of the forms of treatment are rather

severe. The order deals specifically with laser treatment, but I should like the Under-Secretary to give us guidance. Under the order, is there any control over other forms of surgery that might be used to correct some of the aberrant activities of people at home and abroad? I understand that some forms of treatment can be as dangerous as laser and can lead at least to scarring.

Can the Under-Secretary give us an undertaking on the future? The order is entitled "Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Order". Does it give power to the Department to inspect nursing homes and agencies on a wider basis than controlling the use of lasers? I do not think that it does. It is interesting that standards are required for hotels and guest houses, but there does not seem to be any control over the quality of care and standards provided in nursing homes, other than general hygiene.

Private nursing homes are mushrooming in Northern Ireland and, I suspect, Great Britain. I should therefore like to think that there will be some control so that standards are provided for the people who live in them. Someone might say that it is up to the client to decide whether he will pay for unsatisfactory care. Most right hon. and hon. Members know that a high percentage of the cost of staying in such nursing homes is borne by the Department. Will the Minister tell us whether it is the Department's intention to provide control not just over the use of lasers but of standards of care for which, ultimately, the state pays? We wish to ensure that citizens who hope to be looked after properly can be guaranteed that the Department will provide some inspection so as to maintain high standards.

I do not wish to detain the House, because this is not a contentious issue. The only contentious matter was the way in which the order was introduced. We are pleased to have the assurance that this procedure will normally be used for non-controversial matters only and that the leaders of the parties will be made aware of what is happening.

I welcome the order and look forward to seeing it properly policed, so that fly-by-night, back-street and other such agencies are not allowed to continue to practise their policy of death and destruction in the community.

10.26 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): May I add my congratulations to the Minister in his new post? The one satisfactory thing about standing at the Dispatch Box is that one has something on which to lean and on which to put one's notes. In addition, he has the advantage of almost filling the House for a Northern Ireland debate. If he can continue in that vein, we shall continue to be delighted to see him.

As the Minister has explained, the order is designed to enable the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland to control the use of any surgical technique which might be hazardous for patients or staff. Although the order does no say so, the explanatory document issued by the Department of Health and Social Services states:

"The order would empower the Department to make regulations controlling the use of certain lasers in techniques of medicine or surgery, including cosmetic surgery."

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) mentioned some of the cosmetic surgery that takes place in Northern Ireland which will be covered by the order. Those of us who read "Focus on Medicine" in *General Practitioner* of March 1984 will be aware that lasers which are used for cosmetic sugery can be a burning beam or an accurate light knife.

A laser can be used to treat cancer and birthmarks, to stop bleeding and unstop blockages. As that publication also tells us:

"These effects are not, however, achieved by one beam alone. Four kinds of laser are in medical use in Britain at the moment."

There have been cases in this country where the use of a laser beam has had serious consequences for the patient when the treatment went wrong. *The Daily Telegraph* of 16 March 1984 described the tragedy of patients who were left scarred for life after a Harley street doctor had burnt off tattoos using a laser beam. The doctor was ordered to be struck off the register by the General Medical Council professional conduct committee. There is a right of appeal. The patients paid hundreds of pounds to have their tattoos removed and yet they claimed that they were left with weeping wounds and considerable pain, and some of them were scarred for life. The newspaper reported that some of the patients said that they required plastic surgery to remove scars and parts of the tattoos

Mr. Peter Davis, president of the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, declared that laser treatment could destroy tissue in precisely the same way as a red-hot poker. Even the doctor who was ordered to be struck off admitted that, in the wrong hands, the use of laser equipment could be lethal.

No wonder, therefore, that there has been some disquiet in Northern Ireland, as the hon. Member for Belfast, South said, about the fact that legislation extant in Great Britain had yet to cross the water. The complaint in Northern Ireland has been of the lack of controls over the use of laser techniques specifically the removal of tattoos. I can understand the embarrassment of the young man who has "Mary" on his arm instead of "Barbara". Perhaps he should have "Barbara" tattooed on the other arm. It would depend on which side he slept whether he had any difficulty with his tattoo.

The Opposition welcome the introduction of the regulations. It is interesting to note that the power to make similar regulations in Northern Ireland was not available under the Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Act 1971, and that it is proposed to amend that Act by this order to remedy that omission. It is another sign, if we needed it, that until 1972 Northern Ireland was responsible for its own legislation and had little recourse to the House. We understand that consideration will be given to bringing the law on nursing homes in Northern Ireland into line with the law in England and Wales as contained in the Registered Homes Act 1984. The need to bring the law into line in Northern Ireland also reminds us that, for as long as Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, it is illogical that its laws and regulations should be different from those on the mainland. We can well understand the need not to delay introducing these provisions.

Legislation is about people. Therefore, it is right to bring this matter before the House early, as the Minister has done. Although it is always necessary to debate such matters properly, the Opposition welcome the legislation, and the serried ranks behind me will not hinder its passage tonight.

10.32 pm

Mr. Needham: I thank the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for his kind words about my appointment. I shall deal briefly with his points and those of the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth). Article 3(vi) of the order mentions

"any occasion on which a specially controlled technique is used in a nursing home."

That covers a broader range of operations than lasers. Lasers will be specified in an order, which will refer to the use of a class 3B or class 4 laser product. Those products are defined in part 1 of the British Standard 4803.83—radiation safety of laser products are systems.

I also take this opportunity to thank the hon. Member for Belfast, South for his kind words. I shall try to bring to the Front Bench the humour that I displayed on the Back Benches, although some would say that my humour on the Back Benches kept me there for so long. The hon. Gentleman said that the general control of nursing homes is not covered in the order. However, the matter is under consideration, and the priority accorded to it will depend very much on the urgency of problems that arise from the regulation and control of private nursing homes. If the hon. Gentleman or any of his right hon. and hon. Friends have evidence of misuses, we shall give the matter further consideration and introduce an order. However, that consideration should not weigh against the need to bring in this order, which I commend to the House. I hope that it will reach the statute book as quickly as possible to help the young people who need to be protected by it.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.

Representation of the People

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 5th March, be approved.

The Boundary Commission for England submitted the report on its 1984 interim review of parliamentary constituencies on 11 February 1985 and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary proposes that its final recommendations should be implemented in full. Articles 2 to 12 of the draft order substitute the 23 constituencies in the schedule for the corresponding constituencies provided by the Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1983. If the draft is approved by both Houses, it will be submitted to Her Majesty in Council for the order to be made. Article 1(3) provides for the order to come into operation 14 days after it is made without affecting the present constituencies until the next general election. Any by-elections in the intervening period would therefore continue to be fought on the existing boundaries.

Since interim reviews of parliamentary constituencies are comparatively rare events, it may assist the House to know that they generally occur at irregular intervals between the mandatory general reviews which take place every 10 to 15 years. They are also conducted entirely at the discretion of the appropriate parliamentary Boundary Commission and are usually undertaken—as on this occasion—to realign the boundaries of constituencies with those of altered local government areas. The commissions can, however, recommend more radical changes if they so wish, for example, in order to reduce the disparity between the electorates of neighbouring constituencies.

The English commission's last interim review took place 10 years ago. Since then, the commission has conducted mandatory reviews of all the parliamentary and European Parliament constituencies, and those reviews led to recommendations which were implemented in full in 1983 and 1984 respectively. The new parliamentary boundaries established in 1983 reflected the pattern of local government areas which existed when the commission carried out its review. There have since been a number of changes to county, district and district ward boundaries. The alterations were generally quite small, but they have divorced the boundaries of the local government areas concerned from those of the constituencies created in 1983. The commission therefore decided to review 23 constituencies in 11 areas to remove the anomalies.

The 1984 review was quickly completed within eight months of the publication of the statutory notice, and it is clear from the commission's report that its recommendations commanded widespread local acceptance from the outset. The recommendations make the minimum change in each area, namely the realignment of the constituency boundary with the altered local government boundary. Only three objections were made to these proposals during the review, and all but one of the areas affected by the recommendations contained fewer than 500 electors. The exception was in Wiltshire where 1,240 electors were affected by the proposed alteration to the boundary between the Swindon and Devizes constituencies. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr.

Coombs) in his place. However, no objections were raised to that proposal, which would reduce the disparity between the 1984 electorates of those constituencies from 5,950 to 3,586.

My right hon. and learned Friend the former Home Secretary, who is now Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade, received only two representations about the final recommendations and decided not to modify them because the representations that he received merely reiterated objections which had been carefully considered and rejected by the commission during the review. The fact that no further representations have been received since the laying of the commission's report confirms our view that the final recommendations are acceptable to the vast majority of electors in the areas concerned. On that basis, I commend to the House this order, which gives effect to those changes.

10.40 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Under-Secretary of State will be relieved to know that there is far less excitement about these proposals than about the proposals in the last general review. In considering the order, I invite the Under-Secretary to take his mind back to the debate on 2 March 1983. That will remind him of the concern expressed by Labour Members on that occasion over the rules governing the work of the Boundary Commission. He will recall that there were lengthy proceedings in the courts — not entirely successful — at the time of the last general revision. Those proceedings were instituted by the Labour party. In the debate the then Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. and learned Member for Tunbridge Wells (Sir P. Mayhew), gave undertakings on behalf of the Government to look again at the rules governing the work of the commission with a view to tightening them. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), speaking of the criticisms of the way in which the rules of the Boundary Commission had been used, said:

"They have with one exception involved the methods by which the commission attempted to describe and deliniate the new constituencies."

He also said that the Boundary Commission had made the numbers obligatory—to try to get as near as possible to a parity of numbers in constituencies — its second priority, and that the first objective should be

"that a vote cast by an elector in one constituency has the same weight as a vote cast in another constituency." — [*Official Report*, 2 March 1983; Vol. 38, c. 332-34.]

He went on to call for a revision of the rules. I suspect that that principle will not find many critics in the House.

Will the Minister repeat the undertaking that he will consider the concerns expressed about the rules of the Boundary Commission, and, in due course, let us have his response?

10.43 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I support part IV of the order, which refers, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said, to the Wiltshire county and in particular to the divisions of Swindon and Devizes. As he explained, this is necessitated by, and is consequent upon, changes in local government boundaries that have already taken effect. The current register of electors shows 1,210 voters now to be included in the Swindon constituency, who were left out at the time of the main review before the last election, when the Toothill ward, Swindon's western expansion area for those who travel on the M4, was added to the Swindon constituency. All of those electors feel that they are part of Swindon in local government and emotional terms, and many are surprised to learn that they are not as yet in the Swindon constituency. They will be pleased to be included in the Swindon constituency, in time for the next general election.

However, 28 of my constituents will find themselves, as a result of this order, transferred to the Devizes constituency. They live in North Wroughton, and are separated from the remainder of the Swindon constituency by the M4. That seems a logical dividing line. Therefore, it is accepted on all sides that it is correct that they should be in the Devizes constituency.

I shall follow in general terms the words of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary about interim reviews or the principle that lies behind them. I commend to him the idea that interim reviews are a means of overcoming the worst excesses of population drift, particularly from one county to another, or between constituencies, as the years between major reviews go by.

If my hon. Friend were prepared to look at the idea of interim review as a means of counterbalancing population drift, the situation that we have at the moment could be avoided. In counties such as Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and others, the populations, since the 1976 base dates were last reviewed, have already changed out of all recognition. For example, the average size of an electorate for a constituency is over 80,000. Following the principle that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), the Opposition spokesman, has enunciated, I believe that it would be right to consider the issue as and when population drift makes it important to do so. I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister consideration of the principle to ascertain whether a way can be found of balancing electorates between constituencies on a more regular basis than 10 to 15 years, which is currently the case. I commend the order to the House.

10.45 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): This is a necessary order and I join in commending it to the House. There are many areas where adjustments could be made to reflect modern realities as opposed to medieval lines. I hope that a number of similar orders will make the necessary adjustments. We could all produce examples of the sort that my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) has drawn to the attention of the House in areas of the country that we know, including our constituencies. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will encourage the Boundary Commission, whenever adjustments are made to relevant local government boundaries, to bring forward reports as soon as it can that will lead to orders such as the one that we are discussing. They are measures that make necessary changes. With a gap of anything up to 15 years between major, mandatory readjustmemts of boundaries, it is essential that interim changes should be made.

I warmly endorse every word that was said by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). The boundary review which was carried out between 1977 and 1983 was profoundly unsatisfactory in a number of major respects. That was conceded in the debate which ensued by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Tunbridge

[Mr. William Powell]

Wells (Sir P. Mayhew), who is now the Solicitor-General. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will shortly be in a position to bring forward for public discussion, and in due course for detailed consideration by the House, new rules which will give primary emphasis to the need to ensure equality of the vote throughout the country. I hope that they will go so far as to ensure that constituency boundaries will be the same within all parts of the United Kingdom, but that is a controversial point of view. The Boundary Commission's report proposes constituencies of under 50,000 electors and over 80,000, and that cannot be a sensible way to proceed.

One of the matters that must earnestly be considered is a more frequent review than the present maximum of 15 years. My hon. Friend will know that the practice in most countries, including the United States, is a 10-yearly review following the census, which occurs once a decade. That is is a fairly sensible period in which to consider adjustments to boundaries.

It is necessary to review carefully and to try to seek the maximum possible agreement across party boundaries. The Labour party made that point strongly during the discussions that took place. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) was especially and persuasively concerned to ensure that the old rules should no longer survive. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take on board all the views that have been expressed during the debate.

10.48 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I support this order from a disinterested position, having no interest in the arithmetic of it. The balance of numbers between constituencies is absolutely crucial, and our Government, in both this Parliament and the previous one, have behaved in an exemplary way in bringing forward constituency reviews, in terrific contrast to the behaviour of the Labour Government.

There is, however, one point to which I should like to make specific reference. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said that it was crucial to have the vote in one constituency equal in value to the votes in other constituencies. The truth of the matter is, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State realises, that this is impossible to achieve under the present electoral system. It is impossible to achieve it without reform of the electoral system to make it more proportionate than it is at present. For instance, the Government are elected with between 10 and 15 per cent. of the vote in 10 or 15 per cent. of the constituencies, which is, roughly speaking, equivalent to 3 per cent. of the vote overall. Until we have a more proportionate system which reflects the real views of people in this country—Conservative views—we will not achieve the ideal mentioned and, I hope, now supported by the hon. Member for Erdington, of an equal value for each vote in every constituency.

10.50 pm

Mr. Mellor: I welcome the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) to his debut on the Front Bench. Perhaps it is not quite his first appearance, but it is the first time that I have had the pleasure of hearing him from that position. He made a very reasonable point about what has been done to follow up the undertaking given by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, when he was Minister of State, Home Office. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) was concerned about that, too.

We sought to give effect to that undertaking earlier in this Parliament by asking the Select Committee on Home Affairs whether it was prepared to take on this inquiry, which we considered essentially a House of Commons matter. At that time — and I know that the hon. Gentleman is well aware of the work of the Select Committee, as he is a member of it — the Select Committee felt unable to do this, having more pressing matters to attend to. We hope that it will feel able, during the course of the next few months, to become involved in this matter because I think that it would be the ideal forum for it. If by early next year there is still no immediate prospect of the Select Committee being able to embark on this inquiry, we shall want to consider alternative ways of reviewing the commission's rules and procedures. That should still leave plenty of time for any necessary legislation before the commission begins its next general review at the end of the decade. In other words, I stand absolutely by what my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General said in the debate in 1983.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) welcomes these changes. He certainly illuminated my knowledge of the boundaries of his constituency, which makes it almost worth staying up late for this debate, and I am glad that I brought some joy to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) will not mind if I do not press too far into the area of electoral reform at this point. I know that he feels very strongly on the matter. Obviously I take what he says in the way that it was intended. It is entirely a matter for the Boundary Commission when interim reviews take place; but on 15 occasions since 1948 the Boundary Commission has embarked on interim reviews, and I have no doubt that it will do so with even greater enthusiasm having regard to the warm welcome that its present work has been given by the House tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 5th March, be approved.

South Africa

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

10.54 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am delighted to return to the subject of British policy towards the problems in South Africa, even after our debate earlier today.

I have just returned from a trip to South Africa with five colleagues and I am extremely grateful to the South African Government for making it possible for us to go to their country, to learn more about it and to understand it better. Indeed, I am doubly grateful because I feel somewhat better informed than were some of the hon. Members who spoke in our earlier debate.

I am also grateful for the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who answered today's debate and who seems to have been almost continually on the Government Front Bench since we returned from the summer recess.

I am flattered that the Opposition followed my lead in choosing today to debate the problems in South Africa, but I hope that this debate will be more positive than their efforts today and I shall try to leave politicking aside and to think more positively.

Three things struck me on my visit and I think that they must strike anyone going to South Africa for the first time. They are important in understanding the problem and making comments about it. The first is the visible prosperity, both actual and relative, in South Africa. It is apparent in well-developed natural resources, in industry, commerce and agriculture, in better housing than in most parts of Africa, even, yes, in the townships which should never have been created in the first place, in investment in education, even though there is a terrible imbalance between white education and black education, and in strikingly beautiful countryside and seaside, which are tragically and stupidly unequally shared between white South Africans and others. There is much worth preserving and much to build on for the benefit of all South Africans in the future and it would be ludicrous for anyone to advocate putting at risk that better future for blacks, coloured and Indians, as well as for whites.

The second striking reality of South Africa is that sources of wealth and well-being are horrifyingly unequal because of the continued evil of the detestable apartheid system. That was mentioned by many hon. Members, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) in today's debate.

There are insulting laws of apartheid which allow the continued denial of railway facilities, of restaurant and hotel facilities and of beaches, and laws that deny black business men the right to operate their businesses in the best commercial areas, which are still reserved for whites.

Reform of some of those laws has been promised, but it has not yet happened and all the signs are that it will not be extensive enough when it does come.

There are more serious socially and constitutionally divisive apartheid laws of influx control, the Land Act and the Urban Areas Act which regulate the hated pass laws. These are being reviewed, but they should be scrapped.

There are also the rules of South African citizenship, which is now being restored to homeland blacks but without any commitment to the political rights that ought to go with such citizenship. Reform of those rules has also been promised, but it is slow coming and many share the fear that the Government risk taking too little action too late.

Most tragic of all is the Group Areas Act, the cornerstone of apartheid, which forces the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, breaks up communities, creates racial ghettoes and prevents blacks, coloureds and Indians from buying property in the more attractive and much more convenient whit-inhabited areas. That symbol of apartheid is defended by President Botha as non-discriminatory, yet talk of a united South Africa, with one shared citizenship and universal franchise, is nonsense while the Act still applies.

Failure to reform that Act and the Population Registration Act is bound to limit the belief that other promised changes will be the real improvements that they should be. Therefore, moderate leaders from black communities will not readily come forward to discuss and share responsibility for South Africa's future, and that inevitably underlies the terrible and increasing violence which is the third striking reality of South Africa today.

Black townships, arranged so arbitrarily by a uniquely white Government, are naturally a tinder-box for violent dissent when people living there are denied economic, social or political freedom. Undoubtedly, violence stems also from the abdication of responsibility by unrepresentative black local government and by other black community leaders who do too little to influence and control the very young people who assault, rob and kill fellow black citizens in the spurious name of liberation.

There can be little doubt in the mind of anyone who has been to South Africa that black to black violence in the townships is the mark of the start of low key civil war which so far has overflowed only very little into white areas. This, perhaps, may be the best sign that the African National Congress does not truly want violence, whatever it says.

Violence in the townships is fuelled also by something that I believe was not mentioned in the earlier debate today —by the state of emergency declared just three months ago. Although the state of emergency exists in only certain areas, emergency-style aggression is widespread, including not only indiscriminate shotgun fire, sjamboking and search and arrest but incitement to violence and the hunting and shooting of those so incited, as recent reports from Capetown showed.

This seems to have become acceptable practice for all security forces wherever they may be operating. There are increasing numbers of allegations of serious police brutality to detainees held under emergency regulations, as most excellently and worryingly documented by Dr. Wendy Orr.

All this creates fear, and fear is the most dangerous thing in the world because it makes people run amok. Government supporters in South Africa are running amok in pressuring their leaders, under electoral threat, to undertake too little reform far too slowly. The Government themselves are running amok — for instance, in executing Benjamin Moloise in the face of the worldwide clamour for clemency and in withdrawing passports from eight students at Stellenbosch university to prevent them from going to talk to the African National Congress. Those are opposite extremes of violence but both are illustrations of the Government running amok.

The police are running amok in the townships and in the prisons and they are saved from accountability for their

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

actions by the state of emergency laws. Perhaps most tragic of all, people are running amok in reaction to all this and much more. The emergency powers intended to help to control violence seem in fact to be increasing the violence and it is no wonder that the people whom they are supposed to protect no longer want them. For the sake of greater peace and proper reform, the state of emergency must stop right now.

To bring about and to hasten other necessary reforms, some countries and many people — including many Opposition Members of this House — advocate a programme of severe economic sanctions and disinvestment. But equally strong voices in South Africa- -from the sensible and the liberal-minded, not just from Government supporters — oppose such sanctions. It is likely that the working black population and their dependants would be hit the hardest by such measures, and it is certain that economic sanctions and disinvestment would affect the whole of southern Africa, neighbouring states being hit at least as hard as South Africa itself. I rather doubt the efficacy of applying economic sanctions to keep up pressure on the South African Government to undertake the much-needed and long-overdue reforms that we all want.

Having said all that, however, I believe that the threat of an ultimate economic sanction might provide helpful pressure, and that we should start planning such a sanction now — a sanction on the purchase of precious raw materials such as chrome, precious stones such as diamonds and, above all else, precious ore such as gold. Such sanctions will be difficult to plan and will take a long time to plan. For instance, they will require complicated demonetarising of gold from South Africa. Such sanctions would be seen as devastating in their effect, if ever applied. More important, they would be compelling in their influence if never applied. As a diplomatic instrument they would be useful and that is why they should be prepared. That is my first suggestion to the Government.

In the meantime, economic and political signals, like those coming from the Commonwealth conference, have to continue. Economics and politics can no longer be divorced in today's terms, if indeed they ever could or should be. Apartheid and the low wages which accompany it have been a brake on growth, not a fuel for it. Continued pressure and influence must be kept up on business and by business in South Africa to use economic muscle and political might to provide the essential thrust needed to bring about fundamental change in the economic and socio-political structure of South Africa.

Have businesses and businessmen, even the very best, done enough to eliminate the sociological horror of male hostels, to appreciate and eliminate the fact that a quarter of all black wives in South Africa are separated from their husbands for a large part of every working year? Have they done enough to get rid of the too-long accepted privileges of the racial group which controls high-level skills and the best jobs which go with them?

There is a need to explore ways in which black management can be trained to take increasing responsibility in large corporations and in their own businesses. Our Government could have a role in that by encouraging co-operative activities between British business schools and the Government's own excellent Civil Service training facilities and business schools in South Africa. Government influence could also encourage the CBI, the BIM, British chambers of commerce and junior chambers of commerce, which are growing in South Africa, particularly among black South Africans, to build more positive links with counterparts in South Africa in the black community. That is my second suggestion to the Government.

In terms of a direct Government role, I urge Ministers and diplomats to become actively involved in the efforts which many people are already making to get wide-ranging talks on constitutional reform properly started in South Africa. To be of the greatest help to leaders in South Africa, it is essential for the Government to encourage further talks here with South Africa leaders, whether they be elected representatives or individuals representing a significant body of thought. Such talks, in London or South Africa or elsewhere, cannot have pre-conditions attached, not even the precondition of denying violence that the South African Government demand or, as the Foreign Secretary said this afternoon, that our own Government seem to deem necessary. If the British Government can give a lead in denying preconditions, the South African Government may be encouraged to follow.

It is not the ANC which has to give peace a chance, as the Foreign Secretary suggested this afternoon: it is ourselves and the South African Government. Only a little magnanimity is required to drop the present requirement for a specific denial of violence before releasing Nelson Mandela and starting talks with him, or before starting talks with the African National Congress. The South African Government have the strength to do that if only they had the determination. They must show that determination, but we can show them the way.

For our part, we can provide, directly through our own Government representation and through a group of international wise men as suggested by Mr. Hawke of Australia, and indirectly through informal channels, advice to South African political leaders of all parties, but most particularly, of course, to the Government leaders in the National party, on how political strategies can best be prepared so that political and constitutional reform may be achieved with the least dissent and with the greatest consensus across party political, social, economic and tribal groupings. That is not dictation: it is advice. It is unlikely that this process will be completed in six months, which is the deadline now set by the Commonwealth conference, but a good start can quickly be made. The British contribution to policy development and to political strategy could be unique, drawing upon our long involvement in Africa and our knowledge of constitutional development in both Europe and the Commonwealth. The question can no longer be whether there should be majority rule in South Africa but what kind of majority rule is appropriate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) made clear earlier today, we have a shared responsibility because of our involvement. Shared responsibility should be the basis for encouraging shared enthusiasm for reform.

There is another area in which the British Government can help directly by improving standards of education for blacks, for Indians and for coloureds in South Africa. Tragically, thousands of black students will fail their end of year examinations as a vicious, turbulent school year finishes within the next two months. Thousands more will

not be able to take their examinations because of the violence. For many the educational system has entirely broken down.

The core of the problem is a highly segregated educational system and widely differing standards for whites and other races. For instance, there are five times as many black pupils as whites, but the educational budget for whites has been nearly twice that for blacks. Fewer than a quarter of black teachers have a matriculation qualification, which is approximately equal to GCE. Of every 100 black children who started their 12 years of schooling in 1973, only 10 will sit their matriculation examinations this year. Each year the system is producing a new cadre of dropouts to feed the embittered and violent throng of school leavers who believe that liberation is more important than education. Education has passed them by and they have nothing to lose through violence.

To help overcome this huge problem, Britain should expand vastly its educational contribution to South Africa, a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) earlier. At the moment the British Council spends £750,000 on four South African teaching posts and on a handful of young blacks to study in the United Kingdom. We should aim to have a far larger number of teachers, more scholarships to study here and a British Council presence in each township. Only by doing that and encouraging other English-speaking countries to do the same will we be doing our bit ourselves and in co-operation with educational bodies like READ and the Alpha training centre spreading the proper use and comprehension of English, which interestingly is becoming a common tongue for all races in South Africa. In South Africa today every child has some schooling, however bad. A qualitative improvement in that schooling is imperative and Britain must help.

The BBC overseas broadcasting service can help, too, both in building better English comprehension and in maintaining an even balance in broadcast news reporting. This is all the more important in South Africa where broadcasting is very much under direct Government control, although one must mention in this context that there is complete freedom of the press. The overseas service broadcasts in English to South Africa for 18 hours per day and has done so for the last five years. That is a magnificent amount of broadcasting. The Government must maintain that commitment. The BBC itself must seek new ways to promote programmes to the maximum audience.

South Africa is a pariah state because it purports to uphold the standards of western civilisation and democracy and yet insists on ordering its affairs through laws which uphold racism and inequality rather than forbidding them. Britain with its wealth of experience must raise the belief of the South African Government, of officials and of all of the South African people in reform as the only way to get security, peace and prosperity for themselves and for everyone in the South African region. Peoples and Governments do things not because they know they can do them but because they believe that they can do them. That is what is so tragically lacking in South African Government circles. We must help.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): It is a mark of the importance that the House attaches to South Africa that this is the second debate today on the subject. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) on raising the topic.

My hon. Friend began by saying that he has just returned from a visit to South Africa. Those who have visited that country always return with a much fuller appreciation of the uniqueness of South African society because of the system of apartheid. However aware we might be from reading and from what we see on television and hear on radio, it is always an intense shock to see the physical manifestations of the apartheid system of which one cannot be aware without visiting the country.

We are aware of the complexity of the situation and of the fact that it is not simply a matter of good and evil. There are various communities in South Africa, and the predicament facing the white community is how to preserve what they regard as their way of life in a society that clearly requires fundamental reform. All people of good will want there to be a process of reform that will bring political rights and the full manifestation of political liberties that we believe in to all of the people of South Africa without destroying the possibility of a long-term stable future for white South Africans as well as other communities.

My hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the many indignities that remain in the republic of South Africa notwithstanding some of the important reforms that have been announced—some have been implemented—during the past few years. The Group Areas Act, the pass laws, the Population Registration Act and the franchise are the bed rocks of the system. Apart from recent recommendations on the pass laws, those fundamental issues have not been addressed sufficiently by the South African authorities.

My hon. Friend also referred to the state of emergency. It is understandable that any Government have to deal with immediate issues such as spontaneous violence, especially as much of it involves blacks attacking fellow blacks. There is an immediate problem of trying to restore proper internal stability for the sake of all of the peoples of South Africa, and I can understand why a Government feel obliged to do that. However, those who try to be objective in these matters cannot help concluding that the long-term internal stability of South Africa cannot be assured simply by those short-term means and that they must require a process of fundamental political reform.

My hon. Friend made a series of interesting comments and proposals about what would help. Some of his proposals were very constructive. He said that he would like the British Council to play a greater role in the republic of South Africa, especially with regard to educational programmes. The Government share his view that the British Council has a valuable role to play. One of the reasons why we were unable to give an immediate answer to the European Community package—I as the Minister present put a reservation on the British stance—was that one of the proposals was for an ending of cultural contacts with South Africa. I made it clear that there was no way in which the Government could contemplate that if it would lead to problems for the British Council. We eventually managed to get a form of words which has precluded that danger from developing.

The British Council has an allocation of some £1·5 million for the current year for its work in South Africa. There is to be an increased provision next year for technical co-operation activities aimed primarily at

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education for blacks in South Africa. The programme is administered by the British Council on the British Government's behalf. I am sure that my hon. Friend and others interested in these matters will welcome that increased allocation.

My hon. Friend also mentioned BBC broadcasting in the republic. There is not 18 but 22 hours a day of broadcasting to South Africa by the world service in the English language. There is no question of any reduction in the level of that broadcasting. The Government have committed over £100 million to an improvement programme, including the installation of new transmitters and aerials on Ascension Island which will improve reception in South Africa. We expect this new facility to be operational in 1988.

My hon. Friend suggested that while he was against economic sanctions in general there should be the possibility of sanctions involving the sale of South African gold and other minerals. He believes that this would make a useful contribution towards achieving peaceful change in South Africa. I cannot go in detail into the Government's view; it was covered in great detail earlier today. However, my hon. Friend will be aware that one of the Government's main considerations is that we should not be tempted into using any form of pressure against South Africa which would primarily damage blacks in South Africa who are the weakest and most defenceless members of the South African community.

The mining sector is overwhelmingly a source of employment for blacks. Relatively few whites are employed in it. Many tens if not hundreds of thousands of blacks are employed in mining: both South African citizens and blacks from neighbouring countries. If a policy of the kind suggested by my hon. Friend were to be implemented and if it were to have the effect of reducing substantially South Africa's capacity to use its gold and other mineral resources, the employment effects on blacks would be very serious, while white employment would be affected only at the margins.

My hon. Friend referred to the African National Council and to Nelson Mandela. The Government have made it explicitly clear that we believe, as does my hon. Friend, that Nelson Mandela should be released without any preconditions. Last year the Prime Minister made the point directly to P. W. Botha that Nelson Mandela has been in prison for 22 years. Without passing any comment on his original conviction, after such a long period of imprisonment not only would release without preconditions be reasonable in the circumstances but it would undoubtedly have a very important symbolic effect in South Africa. It would manifest the desire for a new start in relations between the Government and the black community in South Africa.

My hon. Friend suggested that the British Government should be willing to have direct talks with the ANC, notwithstanding their present commitment to a policy of violence. The Government try to pursue a consistent policy. We have to take into account not only the ANC but other organisations of a similar kind.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct to mention the PLO. He will remember the circumstances in which contact with the PLO was cancelled. When an organisation is committed to using violence to try to overthrow a Government with whom we have diplomatic relations, it is difficult to permit official Government contact with such an organisation. That distinction can be drawn between these organisations and the South West Africa People's Organisation. SWAPO is not seeking to overthrow the South African Government. There is no legal Government in Namibia, so the situation in that respect is different.

Those are the kind of considerations that the Government have to bear in mind. I ask the House to realise that apart from the ANC there are other terrorist organisations with similar political motives. Although one understands the frustrations that have led many people in South Africa to believe in a policy of violence, the Government believe that such a policy would be disastrous to the interests of both black and white South Africans.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 24 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS AFTER PRAYERS

DARTMOOR COMMONS BILL

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL
Orders read for consideration of Lords amendments.
To be considered upon Monday 28 October.

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords]*

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL
Orders read for consideration of motions.
To be considered upon Monday.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 29 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence Volunteers (Working Party)

1. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite a member of the Devon county council emergency staff to join the working party considering the standardisation of training of civil defence volunteers.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): Devon county council is already represented on the working party through the chief fire officer.

Mr. Speller: Is my hon. Friend aware that the county of Devon probably has the largest and most efficient of all the emergency, volunteer and civil defence services, and that, with the experience that it has acquired during the years from the Lynmouth floods, the Torrey Canyon and the fact that almost all transatlantic aircraft home in on the beacon at Combe Martin, it should have full representation as being both efficient and on the spot?

Mr. Shaw: I am indeed aware that Devon county council has a volunteer strength of about 1,800 souls, including my hon. Friend, and that it is a fine and distinguished body. As my hon. Friend knows, there are 13,000 volunteers nationally. I am convinced that the representation of the chief fire officer, who also has rescue services in hand, is highly appropriate to the working of the committee.

Mr. Merchant: In considering the matter, will my hon. Friend also investigate the training and provision of civil defence in the Tyne and Wear county area, where the latest reports show——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are later questions about that.

Drug Enforcement

2. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are currently employed in drug enforcement duties; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): On 1 January there were 630 police officers in England and Wales assigned full time to force drug squads, and in many forces increases have been made since then. Regional crime squads also devote much of their time to drugs investigations. My right hon. and learned Friend, the then Home Secretary, announced on 18 July substantial new measures, including provision for some 200 additional officers, to strengthen the drugs wings of regional crime squads.

Mr. Hirst: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. I welcome the Government's initiatives in recent months to step up the war against drug pedlars, but does he agree that the drugs problem is far more serious than many people realise? Can he assure me that an appropriate number of police officers will be put on to drug enforcement duties, whatever the cost, and that they will not be taken from other pressing areas of police work?

Mr. Hurd: The announcements that my predecessor made, and what I said about the Metropolitan police on Monday, show that that is being given priority. That also applies to Scotland.

Mr. Nellist: Given the prominence of the question of drug abuse at the Tory party conference, why are there 1,000 fewer Customs officials now than some years ago? Does the Home Secretary agree with the views of the vice chairman of the Coventry, South-East Tory party, Mr. Jon Farmer, who said:

"Drug addiction is a self-inflicted wound, so why should we worry if they die or not? After all, the cost of a coffin is less than the cost of putting these characters right."?

Is that the Tory solution to drug abuse?

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir. On the first point, the hon. Gentleman is introducing into his figures people who have nothing to do with drugs. Within the Customs and Excise there has been an increasing concentration of experts dealing specifically with drugs. My hon. Friend the Minister this month announced a further increase of 150 preventive staff.

It is worth informing the House that last year 360 kilos of herion were seized, 50 per cent. more than in 1983, and almost as much as in the whole of the United States. That shows the increasing success of our current effort.

Mr. Colvin: During the course of their drug enforcement duties, police officers frequently visit public

houses. Has my right hon. Friend seen the brief prepared jointly by the Brewers' Society, the National Union of Licensed Victuallers and the National Association of Licensed House Managers on the subject of drug abuse, which shows the responsible way in which the licensed trade is responding to the problems of drug abuse and helping the police with their duties?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I have seen the initiative, and I welcome it because—as they say in their message to all licensees—pubs, bars and similar premises can easily become vulnerable targets for this evil trade.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the Home Secretary wholly satisfied with the efforts being made by Customs and Excise to assist the police in the detection of the importation of drugs? If not, what further steps will he take?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House that it is the Government's intention to shift the burden of proof so that those who are arrested for the possession of large quantities of drugs, and who have substantial assets, will have to persuade the courts that those assets were not obtained from the sale of drugs?

Mr. Hurd: On the hon. and learned Gentleman's first point, one can never be wholly satisfied about these matters. On 18 July my predecessor announced that Mr. Hewitt had been appointed as national drugs intelligence co-ordinator to pull together the efforts being made. He has already started work.

On the second point, the hon. and learned Gentleman had better await the publication of the Bill that we shall soon be producing on this subject.

Mr. Budgen: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the principle of community policing does not mean that in areas such as Handsworth the police can turn a blind eye to the possession of soft drugs?

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend had had the advantage of listening to me last night—and had he been able to hear what I was saying—he would have heard me deal with the subject. I agree with him that community policing is not a synonym for the absence of law enforcement.

Mr. Soley: To alleviate the pressure on the police, will the Home Secretary give a clear guarantee to the House that the mobile task forces in Customs and Excise that deal with drug smuggling will not be stood down because of the cash restrictions that are likely to be placed upon them?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that they will not be, but, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue that matter, he should do so with the Minister responsible for Customs and Excise.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in addition to the numbers that he has quoted today, the task of handling the problem falls on the whole of the police force? Does he accept that that increased responsibility must be seen in the context of other growing tasks for the police under, for example, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Transport Acts? Will he bear that in mind when reviews on the manning of police forces come to his attention in the coming months?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right. Unfortunately, there is a link between drug trafficking and other sorts of crime, for reasons which we all know. That is one reason why the police are giving the matter such priority, and why we give it priority when we allocate resources.

Visitors (Statistics)

3. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors were refused admission in the last 12 months; and how many of these came from the New Commonwealth or Pakistan.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): In the 12 months ending August 1985, 17,624 people were refused leave to enter, of whom 9,533 were citizens of New Commonwealth countries or Pakistan. Statistics on those refused entry do not identify would-be visitors. To put these figures in context, 8 million passengers were granted leave to enter in the 12 months up to April, of whom 1 million were from the New Commonwealth or Pakistan.

Ms. Short: Does the Minister accept that the existing arrangements for family visits from the Indian sub-continent are not acceptable? Is he aware that at least 20 times each week in my constituency I am telephoned because people are being held at the airport for eight or 12 hours? They are often refused entry simply because they come from a poor background. They are allowed in only through the cumbersome procedure that involves my writing to the Minister. Those people always return home at the end of their visit. Does he understand that my constituents feel that they are put through a humiliating process simply to visit their families? It is not good enough.

Mr. Waddington: The arrangements are not working as well as they might, partly because some hon. Members are abusing their right to make representations in cases. Recently, cases have come to my attention where hon. Members have actually invited people to come to this country, knowing that they had no claim to enter, telling them that they need only mention the name of the hon. Member and temporary admission would be obtained for them. That is highly unsatisfactory, and I hope that hon. Members will not make our task in the immigration service impossible. In 1980, representations were made by hon. Members in 1,000 cases. We estimate that in 1985 representations will have been made in 4,500 cases. The same standards are being applied by immigration officers, as the percentage of refusals have hardly deviated over the years.

Mr. Kaufman: Really!

Mr. Waddington: In view of what I have said, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and his hon. Friends can draw their own conclusions.

Mr. Spencer: Is it not a fact that the number of people granted temporary admission this year will be twice the number granted temporary admission in the last year of the Labour Government? Does that not give the lie to the suggestion that there is something draconian about the way in which our immigration policy is being applied?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. and learned Friend is entirely right. In fact, we have been employing a more relaxed policy in respect of temporary admission. I must hammer home the point that our system of representations

being made in these cases by hon. Members will not work if some hon. Members continue to behave in a manner that was never envisaged when the system was set up in the first place.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that hon. Members would have more confidence in the system if they thought that on many occasions the reasons given for refusal were acceptable? How many of those granted temporary admission are granted a visa at the end of that time? How many of them abscond or disappear? If the temporary admission system is designed to prevent the fraudulent use of the appeal system, overstaying, and so on, the fact that, I understand, few people disappear or otherwise abuse the system shows that too many innocent people are refused admission at the ports.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman should table specific questions to obtain the answers that he requires. Any fair-minded hon. Member looking at the letters that I write explaining why people have been refused entry will recognise at once that our immigration officers are carrying out their job in a perfectly respectable and proper fashion. As I said, some hon. Members are making our task extremely difficult.

Mr. Dickens: Without mincing words, is it not a fact that many hon. Members, sometimes innocently, aid and abet the illegal entry of visitors into the United Kingdom? Is there not a strong case for the whole procedure of hon. Members raising the cases of visitors to this country with the Home Secretary being seriously reviewed and a new system introduced?

Mr. Waddington: I shall not adopt the words used by my hon. Friend, but the vast majority of people in Britain would be amazed to learn that 4,500 people will get into this country this year, having been refused admission by skilled immigration officers who believed that they were not qualified to enter. The vast majority of British people must be amazed to learn that the system is being used by hon. Members in such a way as to allow vast numbers of people to enter who clearly are not qualified to enter.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that he cannot shelter an unacceptable policy by attacking hon. Members? People are perfectly aware of what he is doing. Has the policy on visitors from Bangladesh altered recently? Is he aware that many of us are getting representations from increasing numbers of visitors from Bangladesh who have been refused admission? Moreover, so many of them are being detained that Harmondsworth is full and people are being held in Ashford remand centre? Has there been a change in policy, and, if so, why?

Mr. Waddington: The policy on the representations of Members of Parliament is reasonable, provided hon. Members are prepared to operate it in a sensible and responsible fashion. Unfortunately, some hon. Members are not. Recently, a large number of young men have been arriving at Heathrow from Bangladesh in most suspicious circumstances, which have resulted in our detention facilities being very strained. Something fishy is going on. So far we have not identified the species, but I hope that the message goes back to the operators in Bangladesh that they have been rumbled.

Drug-related Offences (Confiscation of Assets)

5. **Mr. Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to seek additional powers to confiscate assets obtained as a result of drug-related offences.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): Yes, Sir. We intend to introduce legislation very shortly to provide new powers for tracing, freezing and confiscating the proceeds of drug trafficking.

Mr. Baker: I am sure that my hon. Friend's proposals will have widespread support from both sides of the House. Is he aware that the flood of drug addiction, abuse and peddling now affects not only inner-city areas but rural areas, such as Dorset? Will my hon. Friend and his colleagues support the setting up of drug rehabilitation centres in areas such as Dorset?

Mr. Mellor: I know that my hon. Friend will have heard my announcement earlier this month that further funds from the DHSS by way of direct intervention to improve treatment facilities are being provided. I know that my hon. Friend will want to pursue that matter with his district and regional health authorities, most of which are funded for growth and should make a fair proportion of that funding available to improve facilities in this important sector.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: However strong and justified the public reprobation of drug offences, will the Government hesitate long before reintroducing the long disused penalty of confiscation in circumstances that bear no relationship to the confiscation of gear and other material that has been used in the commission of an offence?

Mr. Mellor: The House will want to consider these matters with care when the Bill is introduced. However, the reality of drug trafficking is that so vast are the profits to be made by the people at the top of the trade that merely sending them to prison is not a sufficient deterrent if, as is the position in a number of celebrated cases, they have millions of pounds stashed away in bank accounts around the world on which to live a life of ease and luxury when they are released from prison. None of us wants to reach for draconian measures, but the scale of the international problem posed by major drug traffickers merits this. That is the case that I shall put before the House in due course.

Mr. Sackville: Will not additional powers for confiscation be rendered less effective in the absence of additional powers for tracing, including the requisition of records of financial institutions, domestically and by agreement with other countries?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend, as always on this subject, is absolutely right. New powers will be brought forward in the context of the Bill.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister confirm that the main reason for his consideration of these measures is that there is no proper Customs cover at the ports of entry? Is he aware that four newly-appointed Customs officers at Dover, whose duties specifically related to drugs, have been snatched back for static duties, and that a recent review of training in Customs has reported that training is inadequate at all levels?

Mr. Mellor: There is something rather discreditable about the the way in which the Customs officers' union has put forward a completely false picture of Customs efficiency. It knows only too well that the reduction of 1,000 in the number of staff dealing with Customs is completely inaccurate. The overall reduction in uniformed and preventive staff will be about 350 by the end of the year. That will be matched by more than a doubling of the number of men involved in intelligence work. Customs wish to move away from one readily predictable check in the green and red channels, for which every drug smuggler is prepared, to better ways of getting to the men behind the trade rather than to those who are just running the drugs. They want also to be better able to intercept the drugs at an unpredictable point. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the amount of drugs seized, the number of conspiracies broken up and the number of people who have been brought to book, he will see that Customs and the police, working together, are getting a great deal better. This "knocking" by their union is not in the interests of the men themselves.

Mr. Lawler: I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to join me in congratulating the BBC on its Radio 1 drug alert initiative, during which 3,500 young people and parents contacted Radio 1. Does that not show that there is a great need for more information at local level about how addicts and their parents can obtain advice and help?

Mr. Mellor: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am glad that the Government were able to make money available for the production of some literature that was associated with the Radio 1 campaign. The reasonable view taken by the media of the campaign against drugs has been of great help in putting drugs high on the agenda in discussions among families throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Government have made 4 million leaflets available for parents. We intend to pursue our campaign of warning people, on the basis that, unless the whole community is mobilised in the campaign against drugs, we cannot succeed.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Under-Secretary of State, with his specialised knowledge of the drugs problem, be a little more forthcoming than the Home Secretary and tell us what the Government propose to do about the problem of the burden of proof, which he knows causes severe difficulty in relation to the confiscation of assets in drugs cases?

Mr. Mellor: I shall happily repeat what I said earlier this month in Blackpool. After conviction, either for drug trafficking or for the new offence of handling the proceeds of drug trafficking, on the normal burden of proof—namely, proof beyond reasonable doubt that the individual is guilty—we propose that all of the property of that individual shall be deemed to be the proceeds of drug trafficking, unless the contrary can be proved. That is quite different from reversing the burden of proof on the principal issue of guilt or innocence. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will agree with me that it is difficult for the prosecution to demonstrate where the house in Hampstead and the Rolls-Royce came from, but if the trafficker can afford them from the sale of brushes, presumably he can demonstrate it.

Prisoners (Statistics)

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and women are in prison at present.

Mr. Hurd: On 18 October 1985 there were 45,404 males and 1,583 females held in prison department custody in England and Wales.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these figures are much too high? Does he believe that it is either necessary or desirable to lock up so many people in prison?

Mr. Hurd: The figures have increased because of a surge in the first part of this year. The increase is the result of separate decisions in separate courts, but I agree that it is a disturbing surge. Since then there has been some relief, or some pause, but we cannot be in the least bit complacent about it.

Mr. Jim Callaghan: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that one of my constituents, Mr. Tony Mycock, has just served two years of a five-year sentence for an alleged burglary? Is he further aware that the BBC programme "Rough Justice" has evidence to prove that no such crime was ever committed and that the lady who made the allegations in the first place, a Miss Fitzpatrick, who is now living in America, has said that the whole affair was a figment of her imagination? Does he agree with Lord Devlin and the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir P Gardner) that Tony Mycock is completely innocent of any crime? Can he tell the House exactly what he will do to ensure that Mr. Mycock, an innocent man, is released immediately—I repeat "immediately"—from gaol?

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The lady in question has said various things at various times. I am looking urgently at the matter in the hope of finding a way to resolve it which will commend itself to all strands of opinion in the House.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: The figures given by my right hon. Friend disclose a substantial degree of overcrowding in prisons. Rather than believing that the answer is in further fettering the discretion of the courts in regard to penalties, may I ask my hon. Friend what is happening about the prison building programme?

Mr. Hurd: We are maintaining the prison building programme—it is on course. The current estimated cost is £360 million. As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, it consists of 16 projects, of which three have been completed, five are under construction and four are at detailed design stage. The 16 new prison establishments that I have mentioned will provide a total of about 7,700 new places. This is work that has been neglected over many years, but we now have it in hand.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that one way in which prison overcrowding could be tackled in part would be by the Government bringing forward legislation in line with the suggestion of the Select Committee on Home Affairs in a recent report to the effect that bail needs to be reconsidered both in its terms of reference and in regard to decisions in the Reading justices case and the Nottingham justices case, which might be overturned by legislation. The courts could then from time to time during

a period of remand reconsider bail. In this way, some people would get out on bail and reduce the pressure on prison accommodation.

Mr. Hurd: I would need to consider that, but it did not sound appetising or encouraging from the description that the hon. Gentleman gave. Those who deserve prison sentences should get effective sentences, both as a means of punishment and for the protection of the public. For minor offences, the courts need to have in front of them a range of penalties, including alternatives to custody. It is important that the alternatives should be properly presented to them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the excellent work being done at Morton Hall in my constituency, where low risk category C prisoners are kept in relaxed conditions? Does he agree that many prisoners in secure establishments could be kept properly in less secure establishments?

Mr. Hurd: Let me consider that.

Mr. Kaufman: Returning to the matter raised with the Home Secretary by my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan), may I ask him to be much more precise about when he can make a statement? He has said that he has been considering the case. It is a matter that has aroused widespread concern. That being so, if it were to turn out that the person is serving a sentence for a crime he did not commit, there would be great public anger if that man were not released as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that. The right hon. Gentleman has put it fairly. It is important. It is not as straightforward as it seemed in the television programme. There is nothing unusual about that. It means that we need a bit of time, though not too much, to work out a sensible solution.

Mr. Maclennan: Whatever the position about those who have been convicted, is not the Home Secretary disturbed by the growing number of those held in custody on remand? What does he propose to do about that?

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of the problem. We are trying to reduce the long periods that people have to wait for trial. Next month we are beginning field trials in Birmingham, Bristol, Maidstone and Southwark to apply time limits to the waiting period before trial, a principle well known to the hon. Gentleman because it originated in his country of origin.

Chemical Weapons

7. **Dr. Blackburn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies he has made of the downwind lethal range of the effects of detonation of bombs containing nerve agents; and what, in each case, were the sizes of the bombs, the assumptions about wind and weather conditions and the extent of the effects.

10. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that training in protection against chemical weapons is given in special courses at the Civil Defence college, Easingwold.

16. **Mr. Speed** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department's scientific research branch is working on protective measures against chemical weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Until a comprehensive and verifiable ban on chemical weapons is achieved, the Government judge it prudent to conduct such studies as part of their examination of ways of warning and protecting the population against chemical attack. The work is not yet complete. When it is, my right hon. Friend will consider what information and training it would be appropriate to make available.

Dr. Blackburn: In thanking my hon. Friend for his reply, may I ask him whether the United Kingdom, as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, has an obligation to protect the civilian population from the effects of chemical warfare?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will be aware that NATO has a civil defence committee, which is developing guidelines on a wide range of civil defence measures and long-term measures for the protection of the civilian population against the effects of chemical weapons.

Mr. Hunter: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that courses currently held at the Civil Defence college are inadequate to deal with defence against chemical weapons? Will he acknowledge that there should be specific courses designed for all emergency planning officers?

Mr. Shaw: I accept that. At the moment the courses are less full than they should be, but my hon. Friend will recognise that some of the recommendations of the working party will no doubt be directed at the design of proper training.

Mr. Speed: Does my hon. Friend intend that the Government will provide protection for the general public along the lines already adopted by Switzerland, Sweden and Norway, for example, against the effects of chemical weapons?

Mr. Shaw: I am aware that several countries, including the Scandinavian countries, have a mask system to deal with these matters, and no doubt that will be one of the things considered by the working party.

Mr. Boyes: Is it not irresponsible of the Minister to pretend that people can be protected against chemical weapon attack? Would not he and his colleagues be better employed trying to convince President Reagan to forget about his plans to escalate the number of chemical weapons? The Government should come clean with the public and spend time getting an agreement with the Soviet Union to get rid of all chemical weapon stocks.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Soviet Union has 300,000 tonnes of chemical weapons in stock. He might also take comfort from the fact that next year the United Kingdom will chair the chemical weapons working party at the Geneva talks. I trust that at that time progress will be made.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister tell the House what animals are used in chemical weapons experiments?

Mr. Shaw: No, Sir, because we are presently considering the abolition of chemical weapons.

Mr. Neil Thorne: My hon. Friend has already referred to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of Defence on Tuesday, when he expressed concern about the 300,000 tonnes of chemical weapons held by the Soviet bloc. If he shares my concern about this, not only

for the Service men but for their families, will he try to persuade the Home Secretary to join the Secretary of State for Defence in ensuring that adequate resources are made available for dealing with this hazard?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend can rest assured that my right hon. Friend will certainly lose no time in dealing with this issue when it is properly analysed and recommendations are placed before him. I can assure my hon. Friend that civil defence training and preparation is one of the topics with which we deem it prudent to deal.

Immigration

8. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on changes he has introduced regarding representations by hon. Members on immigration cases.

Mr. Waddington: Since my letter to hon. Members in 1983, no major changes have been introduced into the system of dealing with such representations, although in the summer of this year, when we were faced with a very large influx of Tamils, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary asked hon. Members to help by making their representations within 24 hours or by agreement as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Torney: Is the Minister aware that hon. Members with large numbers of Asians in their constituencies have no need at all to look for cases or to invite cases? Their surgeries are always packed to overflowing and their telephones never stop ringing with calls from Asian people who have been caused considerable hardship by his Department. Is he further aware that there has been some change in allowing Asian women into the country to marry Asian men who are legally here? Why is that, if the hon. and learned Gentleman says that there have been no changes? I have written to him about cases in this category and I am waiting for them to be dealt with. They are cases brought to me by the citizens of Bradford. I did not search for them.

Mr. Waddington: If the hon. Gentleman is referring specifically to wives and financées, presumably he is referring to the change in the rules that took place in July. His question is about the system of representations, and that system has not changed at all. The hon. Gentleman is living in cloud-cuckoo-land if he believes that there is no abuse. I repeat that we never refuse entry to anybody unless there is the clearest evidence that he is not qualified to enter. I invite the hon. Gentleman to read carefully the letters that I sent to him when entry was refused in a particular case by an immigration officer and I upheld that decision.

Sir John Farr: When visitors from the New Commonwealth are allowed in for a limited time, how good is my hon. and learned Friend's monitoring system, and what steps does he take to make sure that those people are sent back and are not allowed to go to ground in some of our inner cities?

Mr. Waddington: The figures that I gave earlier were for those refused entry and later returned abroad. That gives some indication of those returned. I should like our system to be more efficient. At present, those who are refused entry or granted entry for a limited period go on our computer, and if the system works perfectly we should be able to match those who go on to the computer at the beginning with those who leave. We are working to get a more efficient system, but I do not pretend that it is ideal yet.

Mr. Faulds: Would not life be made much easier and pleasanter for certain hon. Members, for the Minister and his staff and for the poor people affected in these cases if he ensured that more appointments were made in his Department to handle such cases, and if more appointments were made in the Foreign Office abroad to handle applications in the countries of origin? Surely the Minister must be aware that the bottlenecks and delays that happen in these cases are entirely due, not to ministerial obfuscation, but to the shortage of staff, abroad and in Britain, to handle these cases?

Mr. Waddington: I remind the hon. Gentleman of the figures that I gave earlier. I want him and other hon. Members to contemplate the enormous burden that has been placed on the immigration and nationality department simply as a result of 4,500 cases—the estimate for 1985 — where hon. Members have intervened or will intervene before the end of the year. That means that 4,500 letters must be written from the Department to hon. Members explaining what has happened in those cases. It does not lie in the mouths of hon. Members to say that there ought to be more staff, unless they are prepared to address themselves to the fact that something is going wrong with the system because some hon. Members are abusing—I am not afraid to use that word—that system.

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act

9. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with sporting organisations about the implementation of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act.

Mr. Hurd: We are in continuing touch with the police and football organisations about the Act. We are awaiting information from the Football League about the effect on clubs' revenue.

Mr. Beith: Are the exemptions being granted by magistrates on a greater or lesser scale than Ministers envisaged when they brought forward the legislation? Has the Home Secretary been able to give assurances to other, well-regulated sports that he has no present intentions to extend the Act to them?

Mr. Hurd: I certainly have no present intention to extend the rules to other sports. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I think that the number of local exemptions that magistrates are giving is broadly in line with what we expected. It was a deliberate act of the Government and Parliament to provide for local decision-taking by magistrates when exemption applications are made.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend accept that the implementation of the Act is having a disastrous effect on the finances of many football clubs? Will he give an undertaking to the House that, as the season progresses, he will look at the Act again, with a view to amending it at the end of the season so that responsible clubs can be exempted?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I gladly give that assurance. We need evidence, and so far we do not have adequate evidence.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Home Secretary aware that it would be easy to eradicate football violence, simply by stopping football matches? That would be the effect of these measures and some safety measures which will have an impact on vulnerable clubs. Will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and put together a rescue package for vulnerable clubs which could otherwise go out of business because of the Act and other measures?

Mr. Hurd: I could have a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I am not sure that I would find it a very fruitful business. He might point out to me, with some justice, that the football industry, here and there, has considerable sums of money available for its own purposes.

Sunday Trading

11. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding Sunday trading; and what replies he has sent.

Mr. Waddington: Since the debate on the report of the Auld committee report in the House of Commons on 20 May we have received representations on all sides of the argument about Sunday trading. We have replied, setting out the reasons for our proposals to abolish statutory restrictions on Sunday trading.

Mr. Latham: Has my hon. and learned Friend noticed that the Church of England General Synod, hardly a nest of bolsheviks, voted by 367 to one against the Government's proposals? Will he, therefore, hoist on board the storm cones going up behind him and drop these divisive and provocative proposals?

Mr. Waddington: I do not believe that there will be any radical change in the character of Sunday as a result of this legislation. In this day and age we are all entitled to spend our Sundays in the way in which we think proper. Some of us may go to church in the morning and then wish thereafter to go to a garden centre or a do-it-yourself store and buy paint to paint the bathroom in the evening. Others may wish to go to church and then stay at home. I hope, incidentally, that they do not turn on the television or the radio or the electricity and thereby cause work for others; but they are entitled to spend their day in that way. This is a matter of fundamental freedom of choice and that is why we are right to legislate.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bruinvels** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday, 24 October.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in New York to address the 40th anniversary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, and to have meetings with President Reagan and others.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in 1984 20,000 young children went missing in this country, including 1,047 from Leicestershire—[HON. MEMBERS: "Including the hon. Member."] — While some hon. Members on the Opposition Benches may find a statistic like that rather amusing, as a member of the Conservative party, the family party, I find this particularly disturbing. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that a central register should be established in conjunction with the Home Office so that parents who are frightened and worred that their children may not be found can have help in locating them? Would he also reconsider Sunday trading because so many children will be left at home on Sunday and may be tempted to disappear when there is no one at home to look after them?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend highlights a serious social phenomenon. I am certain that he is right, that this is a matter that gives rise to growing concern. As I understand it, the police national computer facilities are available for the compilation of records, but I understand that my hon. Friend would wish the scope to be much wider than at present. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office would be happy to see him to discuss the matter further.

Mr. Martin: Is the Leader of the House aware that the BREL workshops in Springburn are in serious difficulties? The local authority has asked to be allowed to do a feasibility study, which is common practice among many local authorities when redundancies are declared, but the BREL management has refused to allow representatives of the local authority on to the premises. Will the Leader of the House ask his colleague the Secretary of State for Transport to look into this very serious matter and try to do something to help alleviate the serious situation in Springburn?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises a relatively narrow point, but undoubtedly one of great substance in Springburn. I shall comply with his request that I inform my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport of this development to see what can be done.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to read the report of Association of British Chambers of Commerce today, which shows a disastrous decline in the business confidence of manufacturing industry and in its orders? Does he agree that high interest rates, a high exchange rate and high pay settlements are completely undermining the competitiveness of British industry? Will this not lead to even higher unemployment, more bankruptcies and lower growth? What will the Government do about it?

Mr. Biffen: I should take that liturgy of gloom more seriously if we were not now in our sixth trade surplus year. After real problems for manufacturing industry as it came to terms with the reality denied it over many years, manufacturing exports are rising at a rate of about 7 per cent. per annum.

Q2. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to scan the newspapers for reports on the statesmanlike speech made last night by Chief Buthelezi, the leader of

Inkartha, the biggest black political movement in South Africa? If he does he will be disappointed, because not a word appears about his remarks, which are both statesmanlike and constructive, and which totally reject mandatory economic sanctions against that country as a way of achieving political change.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that Chief Buthelezi more accurately represents the true voice of black power in South Africa than does the African National Congress? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government's policy is not to talk with terrorist organisations, or any organisation, until they have rejected terrorism as a way of achieving political change?

Mr. Biffen: Chief Buthelezi does speak for a substantial section of opinion in South Africa. I am certain that his advocacy of a policy that avoids sanctions will strike a chord with many hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber. Not least, it will reinforce the remarks of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) who said:

"Total or even selective trade sanctions will not succeed. The history of sanction-breaking in Africa tells us that."

That and much else was put into context yesterday in our debate on the subject. I am certain that my hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance of Chief Buthelezi's role.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the Leader of the House recall that it is exactly one year since the extent of famine in Ethiopia was revealed to the British people by the BBC? That famine is now endemic to all sub-Saharan Africa. How does the right hon. Gentleman justify the Government reducing overseas aid in the same period?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman will know that the Government's aid programme has risen faster than prices over the last three years. I admit that that is in the context of an aid budget which is not that much more than £1,000 million, but it is roughly in line with the OECD percentage of gross domestic product. Before easy promises are struck in Central Hall or anywhere else about doubling the aid programme in the lifetime of a Parliament, I am sure that those who have as their bedside reading the book by Lord Barnett will recollect that the aid budget was cut in two successive years under a Labour Government.

Mr. Hattersley: Since the right hon. Gentleman chooses to make such comparisons, does he remember that between 1974 and 1979 the aid budget was increased by 15 per cent.? What is the increase likely to be—or, more accurately, what will the decrease be—between when the Conservative party came to office and when it loses office in 1987? The right hon. Gentleman chooses to preach to us about priorities. Does he understand that we all accept that Government spending programmes must involve priorities? It is Government priorities that we reject and resent. Why is it right to cut the tax on unearned income instead of increasing overseas aid?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman is wholly wrong in saying that I adopt the stance of preaching on this or any other subject. The moral megaphone used by some politicians is wholly deafening and distasteful. We try to budget as we believe to be appropriate to our total public spending responsibilities. As the IMF episode under the last Labour Government demonstrated, whatever one's early intentions, one has in the end to deal with reality.

Q4. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Leader of the House aware that GEC has recently declared 900 redundancies, 600 in the city of Coventry and 300 in Fife? Does he agree that as the company last year made £725 million profit, increased dividends to its shareholders by £12 million to £107 million, and now has a cash mountain of £1,400 million liquid assets it is disgraceful that workers in Coventry and Scotland, who made those profits and that cash mountain, should now be condemned to long-term unemployment?

Mr. Biffen: Of course, I regret any factors that give rise to unemployment. As I once sought parliamentary representation in Coventry, admittedly without success—I am now happy to stick with Shropshire, which has proved much more congenial—I know that GEC as a company has brought great advantages and prosperity to Coventry over the decades. I suspect that many people would join me in feeling that if many other companies were as effective as GEC British industry generally would be far more competitive.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman take time today to speak to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about the statements made recently in a speech in the United States by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? Is he aware that the Chief Constable said that there was not the necessary co-operation from the Garda in the Republic in the fight against the IRA? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why his right hon. Friend is not prepared to allow the people of Northern Ireland, who are being bombed and murdered by the IRA, to have the full context of that speech, so that they can decide where the truth lies?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that the full context of the speech exists. I do not wish to tangle with the hon. Gentleman on that, but I join him in saying that Sir John Hermon is a most distinguished public servant and that he deserves the support that he has indeed received from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Michie: When the Leader of the House next sees the Prime Minister, will he ask how she can support a Government who have destroyed our industrial base throughout the country, especially in my area of Sheffield, and presided over 4 million unemployed, yet can suddenly find a conscience about the unemployed and use that as an excuse not to impose further sanctions on South Africa?

Mr. Biffen: I shall, of course, refer the question to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as that was the request, but I should not like it to be thought that I was unable to make any comment of my own upon it. The hon. Gentleman seems to overlook the fact that our gross domestic product is rising by more than 2½ per cent. per annum, manufacturing investment is rising at 14½ per cent., there are clear signs of a growth in the employment base and fixed investment is at an all-time high. I know that Labour Members have a vested interest in gloom, but all those factors will come to fruition and make the next election extremely profitable.

Q5. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marlow: If my right hon. Friend were to become leader of a party that sought to win the next general election, and if he had potentially among his more influential colleagues someone with the totally unpleasant characteristics of Mr. Bernard Grant, when asked in the House what he intended to do about Mr. Grant or somebody like him, would he demean himself by ducking the issue, as was done yesterday?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend asks a very interesting question of a somewhat hypothetical nature. The whole hypothesis contained in the expectation that I should be leader of the Conservative party is as improbable as it is entertaining. We are then asked to expect that a Conservative association would have the political misperception to choose a mirror image of Mr. Bernie Grant, which is also wholly improbable. All the tic-tac signs on the Opposition Benches demonstrate acute nervousness. In the House we have come to know and respect the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson), distinguished in his service to the House, to the trade union movement and to the Labour party generally. It is his radicalism and his commitment to the Left which is now being turned aside for a very dubious replacement.

Mr. John Fraser: Is it true that the Prime Minister would uphold the suppression of a Government report on defects in council housing on the ground that it would unnecessarily worry millions of tenants to know that £20 billion must be spent on defects in estates such as the Broadwater Farm estate but there is not the slightest hope of the Treasury allowing local authorities to spend such money?

Mr. Biffen: The charming and convinced way in which that question is proposed conceals the fact that the hon. Gentleman does not believe a word of it. He knows perfectly well that the Government have committed themselves to publish the report, and published it will be.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Dickens: Yes, Sir. I should like your guidance. Question No. 1 to the Prime Minister was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) and concerned child protection, which is a serious subject. Because my hon. Friend is short in stature, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) felt obliged to cast an aside to the effect that my hon. Friend is one of the missing children, which reduced the House to uproar. To put the record straight, may I have your assurance, Mr. Speaker, that the House intends to treat the protection of children seriously? May I thank you for allowing me to raise this issue on a bogus point of order?

Mr. Speaker: I have heard the hon. Gentleman speak on this important matter before. I am afraid that I have no responsibility for this issue, but I have a responsibility to protect the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). Had I heard the remark in question—I am glad to say that I do not hear everything—he would have received that protection today.

Mr. John Carlisle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises out of the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and the presence in Britain of Chief Buthelezi. Right hon. and hon. Members will have been worried to read in this morning's newspapers that Mr. Oliver Tambo——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This sounds very like a continuation of Question Time.

Mr. Carlisle: I hope that the relevance of my point of order will become clear to you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Oliver Tambo, the revolutionary leader of the African National Congress, has been invited to give evidence to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. Why, as he is also in London, was Chief Buthelezi not asked to give evidence to the Select Committee——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not responsible for who is or is not asked to give evidence to a Select Committee. That is entirely a matter for the Select Committee concerned.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Leader of the House make a statement on the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 28 OCTOBER—Consideration of the Lords messages relating to the Insolvency Bill *[Lords]*, and the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Commons consideration of Lords amendments to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

Motions on the European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organistion) Order and the European Communities (Immunities and Privileges of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation) Order.

TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER—Commons consideration of Lords amendments which may be received to the Transport Bill.

Motion on the Supplementary Benefit (requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations Order.

WEDNESDAY 30 OCTOBER—The House will meet at 2.30 pm for prorogation.

The House may also be asked to consider other business as The new Session will be opened on Wednesday 6 November.

Mr. Hattersley: I have three questions to ask arising from the business statement.

First, may we have a promise that the Prime Minister will make a statement next week on the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference while the memory of her performance is still fresh in our minds? Secondly, is there to be a considered response to the report on overseas trade of the House of Lords Select Committee in addition to what the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said last week? Thirdly, may we be told the date on which the Chancellor will make his autumn statement? The leak about its contents and leaks about its omissions are appearing weekly in the Sunday newspapers. May we be told when the authorised version will be presented to us?

Mr. Biffen: It would probably be most helpful if we considered the timing of the autumn statement through the usual channels. As for the Select Committee report on manufacturing industry which has been produced by another place, I am not entirely clear about the proprieties of this matter, but I shall look into the question and get in touch with the right hon. Gentleman. The answer to his first question is "Yes".

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): One of the consequences of the wholesale extension of the Rent Acts has been to remove much rented accommodation from the market. While Rent Acts protection exists in its present form, the prospect of obtaining significant investment in inner cities from the private sector will remain slim. In addition, the prospect of ensuring that accommodation is available in those areas where employment exists will continue. Will my right hon. Friend consult the Prime Minister about the prospects of including in the Queen's Speech legislation designed to repeal some of the provisions of the Rent Acts relating to new leases?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly comply with my hon. Friend's request, but he knows full well that it is not customary for me to anticipate the contents of the Queen's Speech.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Will the Leader of the house do his best to find time to enable us to debate the Official Opposition's prayer against the Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 1985?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly look into that and get in touch with the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Given the widespread concern about road safety both inside and outside the House, can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that we shall have an early debate on the subject, if not next week, as soon as the debate on the Queen's Speech is over?

Mr. Biffen: I shall consider that point. On the other hand, I have a fairly useful safety hatch that I shall not dispense with that early. It is to point out that the debate on the Queen's Speech will present plenty of opportunities for matters such as this to be ventilated.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the right hon. Gentleman approach the Secretary of State for Energy about the possibility of his making a statement before Wednesday on the problem of mine workers who have not paid national insurance contributions for 12 months and an indication of how he will resolve this problem?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly do that, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to point out that the Secretary of State For Energy will be first to answer questions on Monday and there may be opportunities to raise this matter then.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend find time before the House rises next week to make a statement on the efforts being made to persuade the insurance companies involved in the Abbeystead disaster to cease the long-drawn-out process of dragging the victims or the dependants through the courts and instead to behave as generously towards them as the insurers involved in the Manchester airport disaster have behaved towards their victims by making a settlement on generous terms?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly consult my colleagues to see what can be done in response to the point that my hon. Friend has made on a matter that is properly of great concern in her constituency. However, I understand that the question of responsibility for the accident, as well as that of compensation, is currently the subject of legal action, and that is bound to have some inhibiting consequences.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Was the Leader of the House present when the Home Secretary answered question 9 on the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985? If he was, he will have heard the Home Secretary say that he will review the position at the end of the football season. Since much of the cash received by football clubs for the hiring of private boxes and other

such matters comes in well before the end of the season, will the Leader of the House ask his colleague to make an early review of the effects of the Act with a view to changing it well before the end of the football season?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly pass that request to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): If my right hon. Friend will be looking next week for ways of making the Queen's Speech a little shorter, will he start by eliminating from it Bills that are likely to cause trouble on the Government Back Benches? Perhaps next Sunday would be a good time to start.

Mr. Biffen: I have always thought that it was a matter of eliminating either Bills or Back-Bench Members, but I shall consider the matter further.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House join me in congratulating the journalist on *The Observer* who exposed the way in which staff who apply for positions with the BBC are vetted by the security services? While noting the agreement reached yesterday between the unions involved and the BBC, which is some progress, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to make available time for the House to debate such matters, including especially the majority and minority reports of the Select Committee on Home Affairs into the special branch? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there is growing anxiety about the way in which civil liberties in Britain are being undermined, as illustrated by the story in *The Observer* about the BBC, which related to intrusions by the security service into matters that have no bearing on subversion?

Mr. Biffen: I fancy that I am obsequious to most of the press for most of the time, so no special congratulations will be expected of me in respect of *The Observer*. However, I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman said about the matter being suitable for debate. I should point out that he will never have as good an opportunity as he will have during the debate on the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to keep a close eye, both before and after Wednesday, on the efforts of the Australian company Elders IXL to take over Allied Lyons although it is only one quarter the size of Allied Lyons? The latter company employs 2,600 of my constituents. The matter is important in view of the possible effects on their jobs and on their families' prosperity.

Mr. Biffen: When the Englishman's beer becomes the subject of reverse colonisation, it is clearly a matter of great concern to the House. However, my hon. Friend will know that the fair trading legislation and the arrangements of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are well able to deal with the matter.

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 955:

[That this House regards with incredulity the Secretary of State for Wales's unique portrayal as an independent inquiry of an inquiry into the affairs of the Parrot Corporation conducted within his Department by a person appointed by himself and reporting to himself, yet being asked to investigate failures by himself and his own Department and agencies; regards this as a farce; demands a genuine independent inquiry presided over by a judicially equipped individual; and condemns any failure to achieve such an independent investigation because it will prejudice the involvement of outside finance in the future development of job prospects in Wales.]

Since the Leader of the House is charged with defending the well-established conventions of the House, will he draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Wales to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility and point out to him that his appointment of an independent investigator reporting to him is a subversion of that doctrine? When he is talking to the Secretary of State for Wales, will he emphasise the fact that, in view of the widespread anxiety in Wales about the corporation, the Secretary of State should make a statement next week before the house rises, taking into account the terms of the motion, so that the investigation may have enough validity to cause the City to re-establish some confidence in the Secretary of State's office and his agencies?

Mr. Biffen: As a mere point of observation, I should say that the hon. Gentleman is not completely dispassionate in this controversy. However, I shall certainly pass on his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): In view of the Home Secretary's extremely important new initiative on equal opportunities in employment, will my right hon. Friend find time soon to allow the Home Secretary to explain his policies and, most of all, to warn accountants, lawyers, defence contractors, perhaps even whole sectors of the catering industry, and certainly anybody who wishes to do any business with the Government, that before they can do so they must explain and justify their policies for ethnic recruitment?

Mr. Biffen: I have a feeling that my hon. Friend may be injecting into this topic more drama than is fully merited, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to what he has said.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House say when he expects the Secretary of State for the Environment to make an announcement about the selection of sites by NIREX for further investigation for the disposal of radioactive waste? Will he assure the House that the special development orders in respect of those sites will not be debated until the investigation into radioactive waste at present being undertaken by the Environment Select Committee has been concluded and a report made to the House?

Mr. Biffen: Those are genuine points of substance. I shall certainly look into the matter, and convey the hon. Gentleman's remarks to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend will be aware of proposals to enlarge the European Economic Community to include Spain and Portugal and that those proposals must come to the House for consideration before the end of this calendar year. Can he give the House an undertaking, not only that there will be the fullest possible opportunity for debate of these controversial proposals but that there will be an opportunity for a vote so that hon. Members may express their misgivings and those of their constituents about this important and controversial matter?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of my hon. Friend's comments. His points are legitimate, and I ask him to await the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): A little earlier this afternoon the right hon. Gentleman told us with great feeling that he could not stand moral megaphones any more. May we take it that that was in anticipation of his resignation on the return of the Prime Minister to London? Does he accept that, if he resigns from the Government, the whole contraption will fall apart?

Mr. Biffen: That is a most generous and welcome over-interpretation of my role in this whole business. I am grateful for it, but I cannot sensibly comment beyond that.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On the subject of another contraption which may fall apart, will my right hon. Friend ensure that we have an early debate about the Channel fixed-link project? Is he aware of the mounting anxiety about an unnecessary degree of mystery and secrecy surrounding not only the costs and financing of the operation but the Government's criteria for judging which of the bids will be successful, which has not yet been revealed?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot give a specific answer to my hon. Friend, and I must observe the nearness of the Queen's Speech. However, I realise that the matter is of tremendous importance, particularly for certain areas of the south-east, and I shall consider my hon. Friend's points.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the social security order tabled for debate on Tuesday night is the one about which the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has issued a report questioning the vires of the order? If so, is it not unprecedented for the Government to continue with an order when a clear report has been made that almost certainly part of it is illegal? Should not the Government withdraw it because do they not believe in upholding rather than breaking the law?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, made from his position of authority as Chairman of the Joint Committee, but I understand that another view suggests that the matter is not ultra vires and that discussions have been suggested. Perhaps we can see how they proceed.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I return to my abortive point of order about people being invited to Select Committees to give evidence. Will the House have an opportunity to debate the matter? Is my right hon. Friend aware that Mr. Oliver Tambo, leader of the revolutionary African National Congress which is committed to the violent overthrow of the South African Government, has been invited to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee next Tuesday? If Select Committees are to follow that procedure, may we expect evidence to be given by members of the IRA, the Palestine Liberation Organisation and other such terrorist groups to which the Government refuse to speak? May we have an early discussion and, perhaps, guidance from my right hon. Friend about who should or should not be invited to Select Committees?

Mr. Biffen: That raises important questions such as whether the Government should have some form of regulation over who may or may not be called by Select Committees. I believe that it would be the wish of the House that that matter should be left to the Select Committees. If another view was to be expressed, it would have to be expressed by the House rather than the Executive. However, I know that there are strong feelings about this matter, and I shall look into my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): As the Scottish teachers' dispute has been dragging on for well over a year, and as there is a similar dispute south of the border, may we have a debate as soon as possible so that we can express our views on the legitimate demand for a review of teachers' salaries? We must bear in mind that the Government recently handed out increases of up to 17 per cent. to admirals, judges, generals and other top brass, none of whom does such a valuable job as a teacher.

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman should declare a former interest. Being a fair-minded man, he would agree that earlier this week we had two comprehensive statemens on the dispute. Perhaps the best opportunity for the matter to be ventilated again would be presented by the debate on the Queen's Speech.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on civil defence?

Mr. Biffen: I have to travel with great caution. It would be best if my hon. Friend used the excellent opportunities provided by the debate upon the Queen's Speech because it might be some time before a debate in Government time could be arranged on that specific topic.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Leader of the House agree that, because the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible for local government, his door should always be open to any leader of any local authority? Should we not, therefore, debate the intransigence of the Secretary of State in refusing to meet the leader of Liverpool city council, Councillor John Hamilton, to discuss the financial crisis in the city? Is it not a disgrace that, when a city as large as Liverpool is faced with a crisis as a result of the Government's local government policies, it is not debated in the forum of the nation—this House of Commons?

Mr. Biffen: There would be a great deal of interest in any debate on local government in Liverpool, the conduct of the civic leaders and the extent to which such conduct deserved the support of the House. However, that is a luxury that we shall have to forgo for the moment. The hon. Gentleman and others interested in this topic would be well advised to use the occasion of the debate on the Queen's Speech.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Has my right hon. Friend seen the press reports that minor criminal misdemeanours of those working in the Civil Service should be dealt with internally? Does he agree that that is at variance with what happens in the private sector? Will he give an assurance that before any policy decision is made there will be a full debate in the House on any difference between those committing criminal misdemeanours within the public service and those committing them in the private sector?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend knows that that is a matter of importance and general public interest. I shall draw the attention of the relevant Secretary of State to his anxieties.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Did the Leader of the House notice the report during the recess that the Export Credits Guarantee Department had lost £400 million during the previous trading year? Did he realise—I am sure that he did—that the Consolidated Fund had been asked to provide £250 million of taxpayers' money to bale out that body?

Should there not be a statement on that matter before the end of the Session so that we may question why, in the annual report, it was suggested that £22 million was not accounted for? I have written to the Prime Minister and asked her to explain the whereabouts of that £22 million. Some of us believe that the organisation is engaged in certain fraudulent trading practices in Nigeria. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made so that we can determine precisely what has happened to the taxpayers' money? If the Government cannot afford to subsidise the pits, why are they prepared to subsidise practices of that kind, both here and abroad?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes a most serious and substantial allegation against activities which fall largely within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I shall draw his attention to them.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Given the unsurpassed abilities of my right hon. Friend, I should nevertheless welcome his assurance that he has mastered the opportunities afforded by the newly installed Facilityphones. Mine acts very like a girl I once knew: it lights up and squawks every time I press the wrong digit.

Mr. Biffen: I do not think I can outclass that.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Leader of the House explain why Ministers in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have not yet come to the House to announce the aid that they intend to give to the suffering agriculture industry? In particular, will he ensure that the Secretary of State for Scotland announces in detail before Prorogation what the Government propose to do to help the industry to overcome the losses that have been sustained — estimated by the National Farmers Union of Scotland at about £200 million—during this almost unprecedentedly bad summer?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into the question that the hon. Gentleman raises about recompensing farmers for losses resulting from bad weather and draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Scotland to his anxieties.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): May we have a debate, perhaps next week, on the role of county planning and environment committees, in particular Leicestershire's planning committee, which makes recommendations to the environment committee, which promptly disregards them and puts into my constituency 4,500 council houses that are unwanted by my constituents, by myself and by the local councillors for the area? Is this not a typical case of a county council—in this case, unfortunately, a Conservative county council — supported by Labour county councillors, riding roughshod over the wishes of their Members of Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: That highlights the fact that the old skills of the late Lord Morrison, who was once Leader of the House and who managed to build with a great eye for marginality in the seats around London, have not been lost in Leicester. I fear that it is a fact of life with which my hon. Friend may have to learn to live. I will look into the point that he raises, but I cannot guarantee a debate next week.

Mr William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Leader of the House look into the question of empty National Coal Board houses for the occupation of which the NCB will not grant tenancies to the sons and daughters of former mine workers? Will he provide time for a debate on the serious situation that has developed in areas where mines have closed, particularly in constituencies such as mine, where there is an estate of about 40 empty houses? In other words, will he provide time so that we may discuss the plight of people who wish to become tenants of such empty houses but are being denied tenancies by the NCB?

Mr. Biffen: I am not absolutely clear about the extent to which there is a ministerial responsibility in that matter. If there is, it would probably be most appropriate for the issue to be debated, at least initially, on the Adjournment.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As it appears that the courts have been unable to find anybody guilty of riotous behaviour during Mr. Scargill's coal dispute, and as undoubtedly riotous behaviour took place —and particularly as riots have taken place since the coal dispute—is it not a matter of the utmost urgency that the law on riots and the method of the administration of justice should be reformed so that rioters may be brought before the courts and dealt with swiftly?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that my hon. Friend will have a chance to develop that theme when the debate occurs on the Queen's speech. Meanwhile, I shall draw the attention of the Home Secretary to his remarks.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Following the reply of the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) about the Parrot Corporation, may I, too, ask whether he has observed early-day motion 955, which deals with the subject, and whether he has read the report of questions and answers on Monday at Welsh Question Time, when the Secretary of State promised Wales and the House a statement?

We in Wales await that statement anxiously because we want to know what has happened to the millions of pounds involved in the Parrot Corporation. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we are more than concerned about the fact that the Secretary of State is appointing not only the judge but the jury, when he is himself in the dock?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate that this matter was raised both during Welsh questions and in points of order at their termination. I was here and heard some of the exchanges. My recollection was that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales said that he would report further to the House. I shall refer the matter to him.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I wish to impose on the Leader of the House and ask him again about British Rail Engineering Ltd in Springburn. I understand that BREL carried out a consultancy report, as a result of which it declared massive redundancies in my constituency and in other parts of the country. I also understand that the Secretary of State for Transport has the report in his possession. Will the Leader of the House ask

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the Secretary of State to make the report available in the Library as Back Benchers like myself need as much information as possible when redundancies are declared?

Mr. Biffen: In addition to the representations that earlier I promised to make, I shall make the further and refined representations that are now sought.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As SDI, or "star wars", is likely to be a bargaining counter between the superpowers at the Geneva summit, is it not appropriate and essential, in view of the Prime Minister's obvious enthusiasm for this dangerous concept, that we should have a full debate on the issue on the Floor of the House and before the summit in Geneva?

Mr. Biffen: The earliest practical opportunity that we shall have to probe this matter will be in the questions on the statement to be made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister early next week. I should have thought that thereafter this subject would be very much to the fore of thinking in the debate on the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I refer the Leader of the House to earlier remarks about the Channel tunnel. Does he understand the strength of feeling that exists in the north of England in particular but in other parts where industry has also been decimated over recent years that it would be grossly unfair that such a massive amount of fixed investment should go into the richest region of the country? Will he join me in deprecating the fact that those who have a commercial interest are already putting out opinion polls claiming to represent the feelings of Members of Parliament when Parliament has not had the opportunity to debate the issue and make its feelings known?

Mr. Biffen: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's point and I hope that he does not think it casual of me when I say that we went round this subject in the 1970-74 Parliament, and that, even though some things have changed, quite a lot remains the same. On the whole, hon. Members have a certain disdain for opinion polls that purport to represent the opinion of the public at large. I hope that we do not have to be mollycoddled so that we cannot use our own abilities to disregard any attempts by outside organisations to bend our opinions by what they think that we all imagined among ourselves.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have always wanted to ask the Leader of the House this question. Does he feel that the growing and welcome frequency of absence by the Prime Minister from the House is enhancing or hindering his chances of becoming the next Leader of the Conservative party?

Mr. Biffen: That is a question of such central consequence to the fate of the Tory party and our national life that I do not think that I should be required to answer it off the cuff.

Board and Lodging Regulations

4.4 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like a ruling from you on whether it is in order for the Government unprecedentedly to push through regulations such as the board and lodging regulations, which were declared illegal in the High Court on 4 August and which, in their revised form, have now been declared ultra vires by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Is it not improper for the Government to introduce revised regulations that seek to pre-empt the decision of a court of appeal that will not be known until the end of November? Is it not invidious for hon. Members to be asked to vote on regulations that are sub judice and that one of the Select Committees has declared exceed the powers held by the Secretary of State for Social Services? Is this not particularly so as this infamous legislation will lead to evictions beginning two weeks before Christmas? I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule that the Government are not empowered to continue with this measure and, indeed, are now required to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: I do not have that authority. What measures they lay before the House, is entirely a matter for the Government and a matter for debate in the House. I have no authority to withdraw the regulations.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you give us some guidance on whether the debate will be inhibited, when it takes place, by the fact that the whole matter is sub judice?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the debate will be inhibited. We shall be debating an order that the Government will place before the House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you give me a little guidance? As I understand it, when a Bill is presented to the House, you have a duty to check it and to ascertain whether it is in order so that it can proceed through the House. If hon. Members wish to table amendments to a Bill, you again have a duty to inspect them to see whether they are in order. If they are not, they cannot be debated, although they may appear on the amendment paper.

As I understand it, we have been asked to consider a statutory instrument next Tuesday about which, to say the least, there are questions as to whether it is in order. Do you have a duty, Mr. Speaker, to treat any order laid before the House in the same way as primary legislation, or is there a different procedure for statutory instruments? However, if it is your duty to see whether something is in order before we can debate it, I hope that it will be possible for you to look at this matter over the weekend and then tell us whether you agree with the Select Committee that as the matter is not in order it is inappropriate for us to debate it.

Mr. Speaker: I shall certainly look at it, but I do not think that it is a responsibility of mine. It is the Government's prerogative to put orders before the House, and it is for the House to debate them and then either accept them or reject them.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May we ask the Leader

of the House, through you, to say more than he said earlier this afternoon, which was that there is a conflict of legal opinion about the legality of the orders? Be that as it may, can the Leader of the House say whether it has been the precedent for the Government of the day to accept, almost automatically, the findings of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments? If that is the case, why are the Government seeking to creat further legal disturbance and controversy on this matter by introducing these controversial orders next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know what the precedent is on the point raised by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), but it is fair to say that, if the Department of Health and Social Security has a different view, one should at least invite a meeting to see whether the matter can be resolved. I accept that, at the end of the day, one will be influenced by the judgment of the Committee. That is bound to be, and no Government would wish it otherwise.

Public Accounts

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House takes note of the 10th to 24th and 26th to 35th Reports from the Committee on Public Accounts of Session 1983-84, of the 1st to 25th Reports of Session 1984-85 and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance Memoranda on those Reports (Cmnd. 9226, 9325, 9368, 9373, 9452, 9464, 9530, 9546, 9587, 9638 and 9639), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

1983-84

13th Evasion and Enforcement of Vehicle Excise Duty

17th Sale of Government Shareholdings in publicly owned companies

21st Regional Industrial Incentives

33rd MOD: Economy of Stores Support

1984-85

6th Housing Benefits Scheme

9th Monitoring and Control of Nationalised Industries

17th NHS: General Dental Service—*[Mr. Moore.]*

4.8 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): We are today introducing a new form of debate, so that seven of the reports with which we shall be dealing will be highlighted because we feel that they should show the particular interest of the Public Accounts Committee or that there are lessons be learnt, or that they express some of the concern that can best be shown by dealing with these reports.

The last debate on PAC reports took place on 20 March last year, when 46 reports were debated. We had a debate on the De Lorean report on 1 May, and in this interim debate, rather late in the Session, we are discussing 51 reports and 11 Command Papers in reply. When discussing the matters contained in the reports, we do not exclude any of these 51 reports. They can form the subject of an intervention by any hon. Member. We took this step because earlier this year there was a debate on premature retirement from the National Health Service, which formed the subject of one of our reports. A large number of hon. Members were interested in the report and we thought it right to highlight the points which ought to be debated. I am grateful to the Leader of the House for initiating this new form of debate.

It is my pleasant duty to thank my fellow members of the Committee, an impressive number who work far more assiduously than was the case when I first became a member of the Public Accounts Committee about 20 years ago. The House owes a great deal to the hard work done by hon. Members who debate, discuss and examine all these matters over a long time and deal with a formidable amount of paper.

All of our reports are unanimous. This forms the strength of the PAC reports. After questioning witnesses and discussing the draft reports, party differences are subsumed in the interests of achieving better administration and ensuring that value for money is obtained. When it is not obtained, we do not hesitate to say so. The PAC is one of the most demanding of the parliamentary Committees. Its future programme of work, which we shall shortly be discussing, will not make the Committee's task any easier in the months ahead.

My next pleasant duty is to thank the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff in the National Audit Office —Sir Gordon Downey and those who work with him— for the work that they do and for their reports. The new Green Paper reports go into these matters in much greater detail than was previously the case. The reports are agreed

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with the Departments. That is their strength. Therefore, a basis of fact is established. The questions put by Committee members are based upon that basis of fact.

I thank also the Clerk of the Committee, John Rose, and his assistants; Mr. Calvert, the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland, who did noble work in the De Lorean matter; the Treasury officer of accounts, Mr. Judd; and the witnesses who appeared before the Committee.

Each year the Government spend about £130 billion. The PAC looks at about two-thirds of that amount. Our main task is to ensure that the money is spent upon the purposes intended by Parliament and that it goes to the right destinations. Control is effected by reports from the National Audit Office which form the basis of our investigations. I have already referred to the fact that these have been expanded and that the National Audit Office investigations are presented to the Committee and to Parliament as a whole in a much more dramatic way.

The PAC is called the watchdog of Parliament. It is not a label that I like very much, but it is a passable description of the work that we do. Occasionally the Committee bites a little, but its essential function is to warn and, more recently, to encourage. It tries to encourage those Departments that are doing certain things right, rather than each time to produce a negative response. The Committee examines how public money is spent and takes evidence from the Departments of State, based on the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General, who has immediate and direct access to the accounts. The right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) in 1983 introduced an Act under which legislative authority is provided for value for money examinations.

How does the Committee evaluate the effectiveness of Departments? First, we require a clear objective, with estimated financial expectation, to be set out in detail. Next, we ask for monitoring to be incorporated into the scheme, as originally devised, so that if matters do not turn out as planned the earliest possible warning can be given. As a result, we should be able to compare performance with objectives and therefore be able to evaluate the success or otherwise of the scheme.

All of this seems to be fairly obvious, but there have been startling instances when none of this has been implemented for schemes costing many millions of pounds. In the case of premature retirement from the National Health Service, no clear objective was laid down about the number of administrators who would be retiring and there was no means of monitoring the number of those retiring. We were unable, therefore, to establish how many administrators had retired prematurely. This was a glaring example of something that had gone wrong.

My next point concerns the value for money examinations that we undertake more frequently than was previously the case. The value for money requirement calls for much greater judgment than ordinary certification work, which involves checking that money has been used for the purposes for which Parliament intended it to be used. The reputation of the Committee is more difficult to maintain in this respect. Consequently, we rely upon the judgment of the members of the PAC.

This is a very interesting aspect of the Committee's work. However interesting this aspect may be, and however many new avenues are opened up to it, the essential work of checking fraud has to continue. This must always remain the most important part of the Committee's work. It is even more important now because of what is regarded as lower morale, here and there, in the Civil Service. All too frequently civil servants are regarded as those who are unable to succeed in the more important private sector. The reduction in the size of the Civil Service also means there is much less possibility of advancement. Given the state of industry, in particular the construction industry, there is the twin danger of dissatisfied, underpaid civil servants dealing with desperate private contractors.

We must ensure that the standards of probity in our public life, of which we are rightly proud, are retained. Nevertheless, we have to recognise that civil servants face a greater challenge than any with which they have been confronted during the past 100 years. Therefore, it is all the more important to remain vigilant and to treat with adequate severity any failings that come to light.

A criticism that is frequently levelled at the work of the PAC is that it makes civil servants extra careful and that it destroys initiative. It is said that civil servants are cautious, and they are compared unfavourably with managers in the private sector. The comparison is often unfair. Private industry has a simple device for measuring success—profitability. Industry is very good at selling whatever product it wishes to offer for sale. Most of its activities are subordinate to its marketing function. It benefits from a certain degree of aggressive behaviour. This appeals to very many people, who tire of the more objective attitude adopted by civil servants. By comparison, civil servants appear to be laid back.

Those with experience of private industry know about the inefficiencies in its administration. To be fair, efficient administration is not its first priority. Its first priority is to obtain orders and to increase its market presence. However, when dealing with private industry Ministers spend much of their time with the more thrusting characters and come to admire them. They come less frequently into contact with the more inefficient parts of private industry. Often, administration in the Civil Service is compared unfavourably with business practice, but we are never comparing like with like. We should be aware of that.

The National Audit Office has now been established for two years. Its task is to obtain economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relationship between that office and the Public Accounts Committee is not only close, but they mutually trust one another. We work closely together. What we have to do is to compare achievement with outturn, monitoring at the outset any piece of work that is put before us.

Two questions need to be answered about the watchdog functions of the Public Accounts Committee. Should not a good watchdog bite the occasional burglar, or, in similar terms, should not heads roll from time to time? The next question, which is not unrelated, is how far should civil servants take responsibility for the decisions of their Ministers? We know full well that Ministers have the supreme excuse that they can say that they took over a piece of work that had been initiated by another—"I took over a hopeless project. If only I had been there at the beginning it would have been splendid and I could have organised it properly." If a Minister initiated a project, he

might say, "If only I had been able to continue it, it would have been splendid." That illustrates the problem of bringing Ministers to book before the Committee.

One of the most hopeless cases to defend was defended in such terms when my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) tried to assert that everything done about De Lorean was done correctly and well—a view with which the Committee unanimously disagreed.

In regard to the relationship between civil servants and Ministers, civil servants may write a note of dissent absolving themselves from decisions by their Ministers, but that is a matter of last resort. The relationship between civil servant and Minister would move from incompatibility to something approaching hostility if that were done. Therefore, few notes of dissent are written, or perhaps I should say that few such notes are actually delivered. Heads cannot be expected to roll, but lessons can still be learnt.

There are cases where the fault lies at the door of one or more individuals. In such cases, should not action of a more direct kind be taken than put the known black mark against the career of the person involved? If action were taken, would the service be improved thereby, or would the action just satisfy the desire for blood? Those are questions upon which the Public Accounts Committee ponders and which the whole House might consider.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, to whose distinguished chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee I pay tribute. In regard to the relationship between the Civil Service and Ministers and possibly a defensive attitude, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that criticism by the Public Accounts Committee can lead to great improvement? A classic example is the Wardale report on corruption in the Property Services Agency. A hostile report from the PAC undoubtedly produced a considerable improvement, as the PAC itself said in its latest report.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly right. The hon. Gentleman, who is a most assiduous and distinguished member of the Committee, had much to do with that.

Our task is not just to search for scapegoats, but to improve administration and to make sure that when Parliament votes money for certain projects that money is spent in the most economic, efficient and effective way and that the House gets value for money. We act on behalf of the House to ensure that its wishes and needs are protected. It is a tribute to the Committee as a whole that we have an understanding of how these things work in practice. Instead of pursuing legalistic methods of examination, we carry out our work with an understanding that is the hallmark of the Committee.

The 13th report, 1983-84, on vehicle excise duty showed that there was a large amount of evasion that was difficult to measure. In 1977-78 the Department of Transport made an examination which showed that 7 to 9 per cent. of motor cars and 10 to 13 per cent. of goods vehicles and motor cycles evaded tax. The loss of revenue was computed at £135 million to £174 million out of a total of £1,800 million collected in tax in 1982-83. I understand that the estimate has been reduced, and we should like to examine the matter to see whether that is so.

The Department of Transport gave up trying to get anything like full compliance with the law as it existed. It decided in 1980 to settle on the basis of 60 per cent. of cases brought in London and 80 per cent. elsewhere. In 1983, 1,185,000 offences were reported and only 253,000 people were prosecuted or penalised. That was an improvement on 1982. The average fine in 1983 was £33·60, compared with a maximum fine of £425 which the courts could impose. The Department sees no prospect of getting anything like full recovery of the missing revenue.

Alternatives to the method of tax collection are continuous liability or an increase in the duty on petrol. Another option would be to impose the fine on the possessor of the vehicle rather than on its user. Out of a total of 20 million vehicles on our roads, 2 million are without licences. The figure of more than 1 million offence reports suggests that the total number of offences is larger.

We welcome the Department's change of mind in its decision to undertake a further survey on evasion. It cannot be right that the penalties make evasion so profitable when we set a fine of £33·60 against the current licence fee of £100 and remember that that applies only when the offence is known and only when the offender is successfully prosecuted. The odds are too great and the mathematical advantages of non-compliance are far too attractive.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): My right hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that a survey has been carried out. The Government's statistical office published the results last December. Those results are encouraging. They show that there has been a substantial reduction in evasion, with the best estimate being that it is only 4 per cent. of the total, and lost revenue of roughly £90 million per annum. Surely that must reduce the force of the suggestion in the report that alternative means of raising the revenue should be considered.

Mr. Sheldon: I am glad to hear of some improvement, but the matter comes before the Public Accounts Committee so often that I hope the optimism engendered by those comments will be justified. Meanwhile, we note the low number of people prosecuted even when reports are made. I look forward to a contribution to the debate by my hon. Friend, if he is able to make one. We shall listen to him with great interest because of his constituency involvement with the Swansea vehicle licensing centre.

The 17th report of the 1983-84 Session deals with the sale of Government shareholdings in publicly owned companies. It deals with the sale of 51 per cent. of Britoil in November 1982, and 49 per cent. of Associated British Ports Holdings in February 1983. In 1981-82 the previous Committee was concerned about the prices at which British Aerospace and British Petroleum had been sold. The Committee called for a review of the arrangements which had allowed large profits to be made at the taxpayers' expense. We note that in both cases the sales method used was to dispose of 50 per cent. in one operation, and we asked that proper consideration should be given to a phased release of shares.

We were concerned that in settling the terms of the offer the Departments relied heavily on the advice of merchant bankers who were also involved in the underwriting. Such dual involvement provided an incentive to set a price which would ensure that the flotation was fully taken up. The Committee considered that the Departments should

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not rely too heavily on merchant bankers who have an underwriting interest in the sale. Since then there has been further privatisation and substantial profits have been made by those involved. Those matters are likely to come before the Committee in due course.

Policy does not concern the Public Accounts Committee. At all times we are anxious to see that if there is a sale of Government property, national property, whatever it may be, full value is obtained for the taxpayer, on whose behalf we act.

Regional industrial incentives are the subject of the 21st report of 1983-84. At present, there are three categories of assisted areas: special development, development and intermediate areas. Those cover about 28 per cent. of the working population. The regional development grant gives, under true capital expenditure programmes, levels of 22 per cent. payment in special development areas, 15 per cent. in the development areas and nothing at all in the intermediate areas. The RSA is a discretionary payment that can apply to all areas.

In 1981 the previous Committee thought it was time that proper objectives were set for regional assistance, and progress towards them was measured. The major task is to get the highest possible number of jobs in the regions. Of course, due regard must be paid to the amount of money spent, and to do that it is essential to have comprehensive information, and we call for that in paragraph 24 of our report. We know about the Department of Trade and Industry's proposals for initial surveys of the use of incentives and the qualitative indications of cost, but we doubt whether those go far enough. We have not yet been told whether more or fewer jobs will be created under the revised policy, or what the cost will be. What particularly concerned the Committee was that a full review of the effectiveness of revised incentives would be available only five years hence. We need to have a fuller understanding of the effectiveness of the new proposals long before that.

Regional policy has become even more important in recent years, and better forms of monitoring must be made available to the House. Regional policy depends on its success being measured and we need an assurance about that. I was pleased to see in the Treasury minute, which I received on Monday, that new surveys are being proposed which, on the face of it, appear to go some way towards meeting the demand of the Public Accounts Committee for some information against which it can judge the effectiveness or otherwise of the Government's action in this important matter.

The 33rd report of the 1983-84 Session deals with the economy of stores support. The Ministry of Defence has stores held centrally with a value of £5 billion. The Committee considered that the figures suggested a general level of overstocking. We have made that point again and again over the years, and it has always been denied. This time we had the unique advantage of benefiting, if that is the right word, from a major disaster. In 1983 there was a major fire at the central ordnance depot in Donnington, which destroyed stocks with a book value of £169 million. The Ministry decided to replace only £54 million-worth of the stocks that were lost. Why did it not replace the whole of that £169 million-worth? That was the most interesting question of all.

The Ministry of Defence felt that some of those stocks were not important. The Ministry's answer to why it did not buy all these stocks again seemed to us to be wholly inadequate. We asked for the basis of the assessment of what was required and, as we state in our report, the Ministry seemed to view those excess stocks with some equanimity. The Committee was concerned that more than two thirds of the Donnington stocks did not need to be replaced. What is the basis of need for the central depot stocks that exist in other parts of the country?

Invisibles are stocks that are held not centrally but in various sheds and hangars in different parts of the country. Only the RAF knows what it holds locally. It holds £900 million-worth. The Royal Navy thinks that it holds about £270 million-worth, and the Army has not a clue. That cannot be right when we are dealing with £5 billion-plus of what we call invisibles, because we do not know how many there are. It cannot be right that there is such lax control. That laxity of control was denied again and again, as we were able to show in the case of the Donnington fire.

There are two important aspects of this overstocking. First, there are the interest and storage charges on surplus, and with £5 billion-plus worth of stocks interest charges alone amount to much more than £500 million a year. The second point is that excess stocks mean greater deterioration and more rapid obsolescence. It is the easiest thing in the world to over-order just to ensure that there is always enough. In certain stores that policy may just be acceptable, but it is certainly not acceptable in the generality of supplies.

We note with interest that there will be a review of stock holding and that it will not be inhibited from examining the need for separate supply organisations for each of the three services. There may be a chance of merging some of those activities. I understand that the review is nearly complete, and we may return to this matter at the end of the year.

The 6th report of 1984-85 deals with the housing benefit scheme. There used to be two different schemes which provided assistance with rent on the one hand and rates on the other, and those schemes caused problems for local authorities and the DHSS. Under the consultative document that was issued initially, the predominant spur to reform was that the scheme would be easier for claimants to understand, easier to operate and would have a third advantage of reducing the work of the public sector manpower. However, claimants found the scheme difficult to understand, it has been difficult to operate and a significant number of claimants have had to apply to more than one office to get their full entitlement. In addition, the scheme has not produced public service manpower savings. That fact emerged ever more clearly as time went on.

The explanatory note to the Bill that introduced housing benefit said that it was expected that local authorities would require 1,500 or 1,600 more staff, but that there would be fewer civil servants. In practice, although there was a net reduction of 1,900 Civil Service staff—a reduction of 2,400 plus an extra 500 because of increased take up—the number of local authority staff increased by 3,500. The requirement for extra staff has been double what was expected.

Far from an overall reduction of 800 in the number of Civil Service and local authority staff, there has been a net increase of 1,600. Those were the figures at the time of our investigation. They may have changed a little, but my information is that the position has not improved much, if at all.

We were worried because the new scheme was introduced in great haste and so many problems arose that the Secretary of State found it necessary to set up an independent review in the very first year. Local authorities had not been effectively warned of the complexity and volatility of the cases that the DHSS was handing over to them, and proper investigations were not made into the ability of local authorities to cope with the increased work load. It is axiomatic that the operational implications and costs of new schemes should be considered in detail before their introduction, but that clearly was not done in this case. Nothing like this must ever happen again. Many people ought to be ashamed of introducing such a scheme with so little preparation.

The Committee's ninth report deals with the monitoring and control of nationalised industries. The Committee regrets that the National Audit Act did not extend the powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General to nationalised industries. Unfortunately, the industries did not understand the way in which the PAC works. They thought that we would be busy querying all their commercial decisions. In fact, the Committee wants to know whether the decisions are commercial decisions and are not the results of arm twisting by the Government. In that way, the PAC would be the natural ally of the industries.

Of course, not all the decisions of nationalised industries will be commercial decisions. We would see which were commercial decisions and try to promote the advancement of commercial understanding as their main preoccupation. If some decisions were not commercial and the Government wished industries to adopt a course that cost money, the cash for such purposes would have to be found separately. That could be done by payments such as those made to British Rail for commuter services.

The Public Accounts Committee is exactly the right body to understand the division between business requirements and political realities. Not many organisations are able to combine those two difficult functions, but the PAC can do so.

The nationalised industries should have welcomed the involvement of the PAC, as should the Government, because we could have separated some of the decisions that the Government have to make when they resort to the not very happy solution of twisting the arms of nationalised industries rather than understanding that, if nationalised industries are to be successful, commercial realities should be a priority. The omission of such matters from the National Audit Act was a lost opportunity and I believe that eventually we shall have to return to this subject.

I wish to make special mention of the normal controls of nationalised industries, which are extensive and involve control of the corporate plan, monitoring of returns, setting financial targets, performance indicators, appraisals of investment, and the setting of external financing limits and prices.

We are regularly concerned about the function and operation of those controls and how efficient, effective and worthwhile such procedures are in nationalised industries' pursuit of their objectives. We are seeing that the role of EFLs is conflicting with other objectives. The Department of Trade and Industry told us that unless the EFLs were firm limits they had little purpose. But if they are firm limits, what happens to all the other controls? The DTI seemed to support the Treasury view that EFLs take priority.

The Department of Energy had some reservations about the primacy of EFLs, and it was apparent to us that there was a divergence of view that needs to be resolved. A serious issue is at stake. If the EFLs are the dominant controls, where does that leave medium-term planning? Not only are nationalised industries shackled by undercover political involvement, but even when they have a sensible plan for development, which might be readily financed in the private sector, because it is profitable, right and sensible, if the EFL is tightened, the plans of those industries will have to be recast from year to year and perhaps even more frequently. That cannot make sense in the operations of our nationalised industries.

The 17th report of the PAC for 1984-85 dealt with the general dental service. Dentists in the service are paid on a piecework basis for the various forms of treatment. Fees are set to cover average practice expenses and to provide an average net income agreed by the Government. The gross annual income varies widely. In 1983 the average was £42,000, but the income of individual dentists ranged from almost zero to, in one case, £225,669.

Millions of claims are submitted each year to the Dental Estimates Board without independent verification. The amount of paperwork is so voluminous that the board cannot deal with it in anything like a proper way. Because of that, it has been suggested that there is a substantial blank cheque element for dentists in the present arrangements.

We asked the DHSS what steps it took to investigate the high earnings of some dentists. The Department told us that expensive treatments required prior approval, but it had no information on whether unnecessary dental treatment was widespread and accepted that it was ultimately dependent on the integrity of the profession.

The Department and the profession are worried that a small minority might bring dentistry into disrepute, and they have persuaded Ministers to set up a committee of inquiry to examine the extent of unnecessary treatment within the general dentist service. The Department has also advanced to 1985 the date for the installation of a computer that will be able to check the records of dentists. Because of the wide differences in earnings, that is a sensible move, and it is another example of how the PAC operates. We do not merely produce reports and ensure that they are acted upon, as they usually are. Often, Departments anticipate our work when they know that we are interested in a certain subject and they try to find a solution or anticipate our conclusions before we produce the report. This is also valuable and indicates the useful way in which we are able to work with Departments.

There are just two other reports besides those mentioned on the Order Paper which I need to cover briefly because they raise general principles, besides being important in themselves.

The first is the 13th report of 1984-85 on the Forestry Commission. There is one important question here which really must be brought to the attention of the House. When sales of land are made by the Forestry Commission, there is no disclosure, following the sale, of the price realised. In ordinary circumstances, such concealment might be found difficult to justify. In the light of the sale of Hamilton college of education for what amounted to little

[Mr. Sheldon]

more than a song, there is something seriously amiss with a policy which allows the sale of public assets without the public knowing anything about the price realised.

We were quite unconvinced by the Forestry Commission, which felt that secrecy was the best way to get the best price. It might be acceptable in the private sector, but when we are dealing with public assets, even if there were to be some diminution in the price, which I cannot accept without further information, there is a need for public disclosure, because this is the only way in which we can be assured that everything is as it ought to be in this very troubled world. We intend to return to this matter.

The other is the 24th report of 1984-85, on the dockyards. In April this year the Government published a document on the future of the royal dockyards. Three options were suggested: a trading fund, commercial management—the Government's preferred option—and privatisation. Mr. Levene, then the personal adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence, and now the chief of defence procurement, proposed that firms should tender for the exclusive use of facilities, and the rest of the Navy's programme would be open to competition. There are more details of the scheme, but our criticism centres on the assessment of the savings put to us.

The evidence that we took was among the weakest that we have received during this Parliament. The calculations given provided us with no valid basis on which to judge whether any increase in efficiency would result from the Government's preferred option. We noted that the net saving might be as little as 3 per cent. of operating costs over a 10-year period. Meanwhile, there are certain interim measures that are being implemented and savings of 2 per cent. are expected here. So the situation is that, over and above the interim measures, a figure of 1 per cent. minimum net savings is expected.

It is on the tenuous basis of savings of 1 per cent. that this is the preferred option. When challenged, the Ministry of Defence stated that the prospect of a major change ahead was a discipline for the Ministry of Defence to be encouraged to achieve the savings. Would that such disciplines proved effective everywhere. We asked that the information on expected savings be much more reliably based than that which has been given to us.

We work continuously. Members of the Public Accounts Committee retain their enthusiasm and their desire to improve the efficiency, the effectiveness and the economy of the public administration and remain determined to get value for money. Most important, the Committee continues to undertake its duties to the House.

4.53 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I must straight away congratulate the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) on the way in which he has presented our case this afternoon, covering a tremendous amount of ground very lucidly and bringing out the important points that were so often the centre of our discussions. We all join my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) in paying tribute to him for the way in which he has conducted our proceedings.

There is no doubt that year by year—and I have been on and off the Public Accounts Committee for some time—the character of the Committee has changed, not out of recognition but considerably. There is no doubt—and it is partly due to the chairmanship in recent years—that the members of the Committee have had much more say and been encouraged to make far greater contributions to our proceedings. I believe that to be right.

Undoubtedly, a new era came into being after the new legislation and the new status of the Comptroller and Auditor General. We are now receiving much fuller reports and, of course, the scope of our work is widening greatly. We should also give credit to the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff for the work that they are developing because we are still in the early stages of what that department will become. This is not just creating departments for the sake of it; it is for a very real and necessary purpose—to try to ensure that not only is money properly spent, in the old-fashioned sense of the word, but that value for money is achieved.

Going hand in hand with the increased expertise of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and, dare I say, the continued enthusiasm of the Public Accounts Committee looking into the reports presented to it, is the improved expertise of the staff in the Departments. This, too, is important. We dealt with it the last time that we had a full debate on the Public Accounts Committee, so I will not go into it again now, but I hope that we continue to see this improvement in the expertise of the staff dealing with accountancy matters.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton and rather disagree with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne because I believe that our work, far from disheartening civil servants, encourages them. Above all, it encourages better management, because one of the failings within the Departments is that the leaders take too much interest in policy and too little in expert management. The more we encourage good management, the greater service we are doing for the whole of Government activity.

I picked up this vast bundle of papers that we had to look at. Our Chairman was not too disheartened. This afternoon he had clearly recovered from the shock of going over that volume of paper once more. Year by year the volume of paper plonked on our desks, to be read before the next meeting, seems to get bigger and bigger. We do our best, and I hope that the Chairman will not chide us too much if occasionally we have failed to read all the documents before the start of the meeting. Nevertheless, that better documentation and the better reports that we receive from the Comptroller and Auditor General help us in our work and lead to better reports from the Committee.

I do not wish to go into great detail on these reports, but there are two in particular on which I should like to touch. The 33rd report for the Session 1983-84 deals with the economy of store support at the Ministry of Defence. We had an interesting interrogation, and the report is typical of our work. The subject is routine, but it changes in character and is complex. The store problem in the Ministry of Defence is unlike any other store problem. Not many industrial concerns will experience the same problems, which are caused by the changing needs of our forces, the tying together of the different services and the linking of our forces with NATO forces. All such considerations remain constantly under review.

The report rightly makes some criticisms. Our report and the report by Mr. Levene make it clear that much

expertise is involved in store keeping by the services. Like all human endeavour, this endeavour is not always perfect. It was right for us to voice our objections and criticisms.

I welcome Mr. Levene's appointment. Originally he was the Secretary of State's personal assistant. An important matter is involved. In a discussion on 13 March we heard that the basis for certain actions had been contained in a letter from the permanent under-secretary of state. We asked why that letter had not been made available to us. The permanent under-secretary, in a letter which was presented to us on the day that we sought to investigate the matter, told us that

"Mr. Levene presented his report on stockholdings and re-provisioning procedures to the Secretary of State for Defence on 26 June 1984."

That means that a report existed. He went on to say:

"We regard Mr. Levene's Report as helpful and constructive and are reviewing policies and procedures in accordance with its recommendations."

There was a report, and it was being acted upon.

The question was whether such reports should remain confidential to the Secretary of State. The discussion in Committee was lively, and it confirmed what I believe to be the right decision. It confirmed that, although it was reasonable that any advice given while the Secretary of State was making up his mind should be confidential, when a decision was finally made and the reasons for that decision are stated to be a certain report, that report should be available. Sir Gordon Downey set out the position clearly when he said:

"As Sir Clive has pointed out I have thought it right and reasonable that the National Audit Office should have access to these papers at some stage because otherwise I do not see that I am in a position to give this Committee any assurance about the conclusions reached and the basis on which decisions have been taken. It is a convention which has been accepted by the Committee that information provided internally by officials—although I do not think Mr. Levene was an official at the Ministry at the time but by analogy the same may apply—to Ministers would not necessarily be provided as such to the Committee. But access to those papers by me at least provides the Committee with some assurance if I can look at them on the Committee's behalf."

The Chairman agreed with that on our behalf. I should like the Minister to confirm that that general principle is accepted by the Government.

The 21st report for the Session 1984-85 deals with the Export Credits Guarantee Department. Can the Minister confirm that borrowings from the Consolidated Fund are likely to peak at about £1,000 million before starting to fall? That expectation is voiced in the report and in the evidence. Does the Minister have a clearer picture now?

There was a difference of opinion between the Treasury and the ECGD about the way in which the ECGD draws up its accounts and how they are dealt with by the Treasury. Any amount which needs to be borrowed by the ECGD has to be shown in the accounts. We wanted to know how this would be shown by the Treasury. The answer is that the impact would eventually show up in the public sector borrowing requirement.

The evidence seemed to show that there was not entire agreement about the sums involved. I put questions to Mr. Gill and to Mr. Judd of the Treasury and received an answer in part from Mrs. Case, who said:

"ECGD have to make provisions because they draw up their accounts on a commercial basis. Of course the Treasury has to take account of the sort of figures Mr. Gill has been describing, in terms of drawing up the Budget forecast because those cashflow figures have an impact on PSBR."

I said that that was what I understood. When I asked whether she would accept Mr. Gill's figures, she said:

"We are still discussing them with him. The sort of figures he is describing are the figures which are currently being assessed and being taken account of in the Treasury."

Presumably discussion has now taken place and finality has been reached. Do the ECGD and the Treasury agree on the figures necessary for calculating the PSBR? If there is a difference of opinion, whose opinion will prevail—that of the Treasury or that of the ECGD?

Do the objectives of the ECGD still remain the same? I understand that the Government are determined to ensure that British exporters have at least the quality of assistance that is available to their foreign competitors in seeking foreign orders. I fully support that. I have always opposed free trade, but I am strongly in favour of free and fair trade. When I say "fair trade", I mean trade that is fair to the British trader, because I know jolly well that every other country will do all that it can to look after its own citizens. Is it now part of Government policy to use ECGD, where necessary, to place the British exporter on level terms with his foreign competitors? If so, what are the arrangements, if any, for disclosing that fact in the accounts of the ECGD?

In conclusion, although the work that we do in the PAC is often not very glamorous—it involves going over old subjects time and again to see what has happened, what is happening and what is going to happen—unless that work continues to be done to the best of our ability, I believe that shortcomings will go undiscovered and the Government and the taxpayer will be the losers.

5.12 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Public Accounts Committee is the senior Committee of the House. As the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir. M. Shaw) said, its work is often unglamorous, unsexy and unsung. It is perhaps rather sad that, despite all the good work done by that Committee, as evidenced in the large number of reports before us today, there are not more hon. Members, particularly those who are not members of the Committee, participating in its work today.

I sincerely congratulate the Chairman and members of the Committee, who produced these most worthwhile reports. I was also pleased to note that there is a new breath of democracy in the proceedings of the Committee. I congratulate not only the members of the Committee, but the Chairman who, both generally and in his presentation today, has added enormous credit to this non-partisan Committee which works very hard indeed on behalf of the British taxpayer.

I was tempted to stray into consideration of a number of the Committee's reports—in particular, that on the management of the overseas estate, the 15th report, and the second report of 1984-85 on diplomatic manpower. It is true that the crude percentage reduction in the budget of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has, in a number of cases, had very adverse effects on the quality of our overseas representation. Similar considerations apply to the British Council and other overseas matters. I will, however, avoid that temptation and spend a short time on a matter which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) kindly pointed out, has a certain constituency interest for me—the report on the evasion and enforcement of vehicle excise duty, which was ordered to be printed in March last year. The Treasury

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

minute in reply was printed in August last year. Clearly, quite a lot of water has flowed since that time and there is a need for some updating on this subject.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to the level of fines. I am pleased that the report drew attention to the ludicrously inadequate fines imposed by the courts on vehicle excise duty payment defaulters. The average fine at the time of the compilation of the report was a mere £36. That cannot act as a deterrent when set against the annual duty of £100 for private vehicles. The honest motorist would endorse a substantial increase in fines for the tax dodger whom he or she is effectively subsidising.

Paragraph 4 of the Treasury's response to that report stated:

"The Committee's concern at the low average level of fines imposed on evaders is being drawn to the attention of the Magistrates' Association, and in Scotland to the District Courts Association, the Sheriffs' Association and the Association of Sheriffs Principal."

It would be interesting to know whether those bodies have indeed issued guidance to magistrates and others as a result of that concern being drawn to their attention.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has a strong constituency interest in this matter. I am sure that he will not mind my helping him by saying that in 1984 the average court fine had risen to £44, but he will know that that is less than 10 per cent. of the total penalties that could be prescribed by statute, which would be five times the annual rate of duty. That may be of help to the hon. Gentleman in his argument.

Mr. Anderson: That figure is above the rate of inflation and, therefore, a marginal improvement. I am grateful for the Minister's intervention, as I was somewhat puzzled by a letter from the director of the Department of Transport driver and vehicle licensing centre who wrote to the *Financial Times* on 15 October:

"The average penalty at £63 was 25 per cent. higher than the cost of a six monthly licence."

That is at least some comfort.

The report mentions local campaigns. The Department has so far run 50 intensive local campaigns with the help of the police. Four campaigns are under way or have been held this month in London, south Wales, Manchester and Cumbria. The campaigns are to be welcomed, provided that any additional work generated can be met by an increase in staff.

At the time of the report, February 1984, no Scottish police forces had been prepared to co-operate in one of these local blitz campaigns. As evasion in Scotland is said to be 25 per cent. higher than in the rest of the country, it would be interesting to know whether the Scottish police forces are now prepared to give a higher priority to countering the evasion of vehicle excise duty. Has there been any change in their attitude?

The results of a survey prepared by the Government statistical service were published by the Department of Transport in its statistics bulletin in December last year. The key finding of that survey was that the cost to the country of evasion was £90 million per annum, or 4 per cent. of the total, which clearly is a substantial increase. Compared with the 7 to 9 per cent. in 1979-80, the loss of £90 million in revenue is substantial and more should be done to collect it.

Paragraph 8 of the report mentions a procedural problem in Scotland—that two witnesses are required as corroboration of evasion in these reports. It was suggested that it should be recommended to Ministers that that procedural need should be changed. It would be interesting to learn whether the Ministers have considered this recommendation and whether there is to be any amendment in the Scottish law relating to corroboration.

The abolition of vehicle excise duty has been tempting for successive Governments, and it has been discussed for the past 15 years. The Committee recommends a switch from vehicle excise duty to a tax on petrol if evasion remains a major problem. A survey published in December last year shows that the problem has now been substantially contained, if not resolved. The possibility of switching to a tax on petrol was considered by Mr. William Rodgers when he was Secretary of State for Transport in 1977-78 and by the present Secretary of State for Social Services when he was Minister of Transport in 1979.

At that time, the option of abolition was rejected on the basis that too large a share of the burden of motoring taxation would be carried by the high-mileage rural motorist and essential business users. In 1979 it was estimated that such a tax would add in excess of £100 million per annum to business costs. An increase of at least 38p per gallon on petrol would be necessary to compensate for the loss of revenue from vehicle excise duty and the spiral of inflation would be refuelled at a stroke.

From a constituency point of view, I take comfort from the fact that no Government are likely to be so bold as to impose an additional 38p on a gallon of petrol. There is a wide range of opposition — the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club and the Motor Agents Association—to such a suggestion.

I was interested in what the permanent secretary at the Department of Transport said about necessary staff changes if work on evasion were to be increased. I note that the report urges the Department to ensure that no reports of offences are abandoned purely through lack of staff. In paragraph 12 of the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, it was suggested that the Department of Transport had insufficient staff to handle all the reported cases of suspected evasion. During the examination of witnesses on 4 February last year, the Chairman asked the permanent secretary at the Department what increase in staff would be required to deal with that problem. In reply, Sir Peter Lazarus said:

"If we were to try to deal with every report and carry it on for as long as we could, we would probably need of the order of an additional 1,000 staff, as compared with the 900 odd that I have on enforcement at the moment. Almost certainly that would not produce the best net revenue position. We think it far more likely that we would get the maximum net revenue improvement if we had something like an additional 400 or perhaps 500 staff, but we would want to take them on at perhaps 150 a year or something like that."

There is no serious suggestion that the number of staff on enforcement duty should be doubled, but the professional view of the permanent secretary is that a further 500 staff could be recruited cost effectively. I was surprised that there was no response from the Treasury to that point. There has been no sign whether the Treasury accepts that

it would be cost effective to recruit the staff required to carry out enforcement work. It would be helpful if the Minister would comment on that.

I remind the Minister that next year, as a result of new computers coming on stream at Swansea, more than 500 staff will no longer be needed. Since 1982, productivity has increased by over 15 per cent., so this matter should be looked at carefully in relation to the staffing implications.

It has been suggested that draconian measures would increase enforcement and that wheel clamps should be considered. That would almost certainly run foul of public opinion — although there may be a case for the introduction of clamps as an enforcement measure on an experimental basis in areas of high evasion.

I commend the Committee on the quality of its work and report and look forward to the Minister's response.

5.28 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): First, I wish to say what a pleasure it was to be under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He gave, as one would expect, a thorough and comprehensive account of our sittings—as a managing director does in the report of the companies under his command. The rest of us are fortunate in not having to follow him in every detail—we can pick out the nuggets that appeal to us.

I wish to discuss regional policy. It is a topic that has come before us many times in the past 12 years. We have questioned the Department of Trade and Industry since it was founded on the efficacy of its regional policy, the results of which have not been as satisfactory as we or the Department had hoped they would be. We have reported many times on this subject and no less than £20,000 million has been spent during the past 20 years on regional aid. We now have to ask what we have to show for this expenditure.

In 1965, unemployment in the north was 2·5 per cent. It is now over 18 per cent. In the north-west it was 1·6 per cent., but it is now 15·8 per cent. In Wales unemployment was 2·3 per cent., but it is now over 16 per cent., and in Scotland it was 3 per cent. and it is now 15 per cent. It is true that unemployment has occurred in all the developed economies, and that it affects manufacturing industry most severely, but I think it is correct to say that unemployment has affected Britain more than other countries. Regional incentives and regional development grants do not seem able to stem this adverse tide. We must ask whether the present system of regional incentives, which we have had for many years, is as good as it should be.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne spoke of the way in which the work of our Committee had developed over the years. He said that the Comptroller and Auditor General was now more concerned with value for money. This is a developing trend, and I am sure that the Comptroller will produce many more worthwhile reports on value for money for us to consider.

When we have, as I think we have in this case, a long-standing role by a Department to produce incentives for the regions which palpably have not produced results, we as a Committee have the responsibility to go further. Nobody will question the right of the Comptroller to consider value for money, although when it was originally suggested I think it was viewed with suspicion by the Treasury Bench. After a time, and under successive Governments—because party politics is not involved in this issue—it becomes necessary to look at a broad form of policy and to ask whether the institutions that serve that policy are as good as they should be.

In our review of regional policy we found that the very large capital grants that had been made over the years employed relatively few people. For example, the chemical industry received some £1,400 million, yet employed a minimal number of people. Firms such as Dunlop are attracted to Liverpool, but as soon as the recession bites, large national and international firms in places such as Liverpool close their factories and take their regional grants with them. Therefore, it is right to make the grant dependent upon jobs rather than on the size of capital investment. I understand that this is the nature of the change being brought about by my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. Even so, we have been spending some £700 million a year on capital intensive projects, which is double the rate in West Germany. That in itself is an indication of the need for a review.

It is disappointing, as our report shows, that academic research has not been able to identify a particular success in regional policy, although overall that research is unanimous in saying that such a policy is of some use. It is not surprising that academic research has not been able to point to particular successes. If there has ever been a growth industry, it is academic research into regional aid. That research has not been directed at alternative means of regional support, but at existing means in order to determine how effective it is.

It is true that the PAC, in its deliberations, is supposed to question not Government policy but its administration, and what I have to say now is strictly in terms of administration and not of policy. Furthermore, it applies to all Governments, of whatever nature, over a long period of time. We cannot be inhibited in this debate from stating our views. My view is that regional incentives, as they have been practised in this country, are wasteful, out-of-date and ineffective. The reason is not that they are poorly administrated, but there are too many Government agencies competing with each other to pursue the same objective, and not enough effort is made to see whether these objectives could be reached by other means.

I do not know how many different forms of Government assistance there are for places such as Merseyside, but Liverpool has a large number of empty factories which were built by different Government agencies acting, apparently, in ignorance of one another. We are too ready to accept the need for the existence of so many different institutions without questioning their relevance in changed conditions, and we have failed to observe the lessons that other countries teach us.

Comparisons with regional grants in other countries have been made by the Department and by academic research, but, as far as I know, there has been no study of the institutions that direct that regional aid. Why is it that the United States and Germany—two most successful economies—manage without a Department of Trade and Industry? In this country we have an enormous Department, which has grown substantially over the years. I asked Department of Trade officials that question on one occasion and felt like the man in the Batman cartoon. I shall not ask that again. I ask it here because the officials are not before us. What use is that Department if it is not providing more jobs?

[Sir Peter Hordern]

The lesson of regional policy is that a comprehensive approach is necessary: not just regional grants for industry, but improvements to the urban aid programme, tax cuts, lower national insurance contributions in the regions to cheapen the cost of work and regional rate relief. Why is a package of these measures not considered for the regions, instead of sticking to the tried and failed mechanism of regional grants? If we want to understand why some parts of the country are more successful than others, we must study the composition of the successful areas in this and other countries.

Why is so much of the Civil Service and the Ministry of Defence based in London and the home counties? Why do we pay a London weighting allowance for civil servants, but not a Liverpool weighting allowance? That is where the money should go. It is hard to define what constitutes a successful regional policy. Experience in Belgium, France and the United States suggests that tax concessions for operations in the regions are likely to have a greater benefit than cash handouts. I cannot understand why the Treasury is so singularly lacking in imagination as not to experiment with regional differences in national insurance contributions, corporation tax or tax exempt municipal bonds, as they do in the United States.

The Foreign Office has the reputation of being the most conservative institution in Whitehall, but in my view the Treasury wins hands down. What other institution would be so lavish in accepting waste and misdirection of taxpayers' money in terms of getting results, and yet be so niggardly with its pounds? It is true that we have seen substantial growth in business expansion schemes, but the Treasury fails to recognise that to achieve success in the regions we must reduce the cost of work.

From what I have seen of Liverpool and other cities in the north, I am persuaded that there is no single solution to rising unemployment in the regions. I believe that regional development grants and urban development grants should be handled by the same Minister and that that Minister should be the Secretary of State for the Environment. Each city or region has its own characteristics which demand an individual approach. It is more sensible to improve the environment and reduce the cost of work in those areas than to give money to companies. We must review the institutions and machinery that are responsible for distributing aid in all its forms, not the efficiency of regional aid. Perhaps that is something that my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Young could best carry out as a neutral but primarily interested party.

The purport of our report is that regional aid has been, and remains, unsatisfactory and that it is time for a change.

5.41 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) made some interesting comments about regional aid. Initially, I thought his conclusion would be that regional aid was not a necessary or important part of the way in which our economy is run. I was pleased to hear that that was not his conclusion. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that in my bitter experience, in my constituency the removal of even the current system of assistance is viewed harshly. More importantly, the businesses in my constituency, especially those which were attracted to the area by regional grants, view its removal extremely harshly. My constituency is unique in the south-west in being cut out of regional grants. The Government considered that Solihull and Stratford needed assistance because their unemployment problems are greater than those in the far south-west, although that is manifestly not so.

I do not criticise the Government for all their efforts to reduce national insurance contributions and corporation tax, and all their microeconomic measures, but they pale into abject insignificance beside the exchange rate, which has been maintained to the detriment of the manufacturing sector during the past five or six years. A reduction of 1 per cent. in national insurance is insignificant if overseas competitors are 15 or 20 per cent. better off because of the exchange rates. If there is a real desire to put some buoyancy back into the remoter regions of Britain, the entire philosophy and economic base of exchange rates must be examined. This matter is not strictly within the confines of the reports, although there are so many reports that this debate is as close to a Consolidated Fund debate as any we could have in the House. Any matter could be raised if we so desired.

Although I am not a member of the Committee, I believe that a great deal of valuable work has been done. More publicity could be justified for the work done on the Committee, which does not receive the recognition that it deserves. The work done by the Committee Chairman has already been praised by several hon. Members. Although I was not on the Committee, it sounded from the speech of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) that that praise was deserved, so I shall add my thanks.

Oddly, although specific matters have been raised, the wrong people are here to listen. We have discussed defence, housing benefit, regional aid and any number of subjects that tickle our fancy or catch our eye, but the man responsible for the detail of the administration which has been the subject of complaint is not on the Government Front Bench. The Treasury has a broad sweep of responsibility, but nearly all the difficulties discussed are primarily somebody else's responsibility.

I have glanced through the documents, although I cannot confess that I have read every line. I was determined to do so, until somebody got them for me. However, a number of points caught my eye. I was especially struck by the Donnington store evidence. There are one or two magnificent lines which are worth incorporating into after-dinner speeches, but there are also more serious aspects. The details are well known. There was a fire, and a great deal of stock was ruined. It had a book value, but the Government chose to replace about a third of it. I found the Government's response unsatisfactory:

> "While agreeing that lessons can be learnt from the Donnington fire, the MOD does not accept that the decision not to replace most of the stocks lost in the fire at COD Donnington is evidence of excessive holdings. Because the replacement cost of certain stores is very much in excess of the disposable value, it may be cost-effective to retain existing holdings but may not be cost-effective, or even possible, to replace them."

The response must be read several times to get the gist of it, but it does not deal with the question. The real question is whether the stocks should have been bought in the first place. If one has four overcoats and they are stolen, only one is likely to be replaced if one gets money from the insurance company. But the company might ask

why four overcoats were bought in the first place. The question to be asked about the Donnington fire must be why the stocks were bought in the first place.

I admit that the following is hearsay, but there are some defence establishments in my part of the country. I meet and talk to their representatives, and occasionally we discuss things that we should not discuss. The general view among people in responsible posts is that there is a degree of slackness and overstocking. There was a magnificent reference in one report. A witness questioned on the amount of stuff stolen replied with some pride that stealing was not a problem. By chance, I discussed this with a constituent, who said that there was nothing in there worth pinching. He said that most of the stock was so old and out of date that it was better to go out and buy new. That is perhaps an exaggeration, but there is a general feeling that all is not well in that area. The Donnington fire is good evidence of that. I hope that the Committee will not give up on that matter and that it will return to it to consider the outcome, because real hard money is involved. To cover the loan costs about £500 or £600 million a year. It is not difficult to think of a better use for that money.

One report discussed the housing benefit scheme. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne was not too kind about the reality of what happened with the housing benefit scheme. In many parts of the country — mine was not the worst—what occurred was not far short of obscene chaos. There was no preparation. People were without benefit for weeks. We are not talking about people who could go to the bank, merrily borrow a few hundred pounds and curse the Government of the day because they had not received their cheque. Those people were living on a week-to-week basis. The preparation for the administration of the housing benefit scheme was a disaster.

The Citizens' Advice Bureau has given me several examples, collected within the past months, of manifold problems that still exist. It states:

"Several clients have told us forms they submitted have been lost."

The capacity of Government Departments to lose forms never ceases to amaze me—not that I always believe that my constituents have sent them. The CAB also said that there had been,

"failure to process claims for HB within the 14 days . . . due to extreme delays in processing of claims for HB by the HB Section of the Finance Departments."

The CAB also alleges a

"vast backlog of work and administration on claims for housing benefit".

We all know that this is true. It is not so bad in my constituency, although I have pursued five housing benefit cases for constituents of London boroughs who happen to be students in London. The delay is beyond total comprehension. The irony is that we were told that the system would be more efficient and reduce the number of Government employees, but, as has been pointed out, there are almost 2,000 extra employees. Nevertheless, that is not my main point. That is history, and I hope that one can learn something from the mistakes that undoubtedly have been made.

My main consideration is to warn the Government, not from malice but from reading the position—sometimes one sees Government policies better from the Opposition Benches rather than the Government Benches — that such is their enthusiasm to reform social security benefits under what is generally known as the Fowler review before the general election, which is only two and a half years away—I may even agree with some of the reforms, but we shall have to wait and see—that it could lead to a second dose of chaos on a large scale. I ask the Treasury, as only Treasury Ministers are present, to demand of other Departments that the administrative details of the scheme that is finally produced are carefully thought out and cross-checked. Otherwise, great hardship will be created—ironically, unintentionally. I may argue with the Government over benefits, and claim that their policy is causing hardship, but the hardship of which I am now speaking is not intentional. It is born out of chaos, and in many cases that is worse than any intended consequence. When I deal with constituency cases and the Departments co-operate well, I am aware that for every 10 constituents who come, 110 do not, and I wonder who sorts out their problems.

My third and final point was in some ways covered by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). I have not quite the same interest to declare as he has, and I cannot honestly say that I would defend the road fund licence on the basis of the Swansea licensing centre. However, at times allies are found in peculiar quarters, and I, too, ask the House to defend the road fund licence. I remember the arguments in 1979 with the then Minister of Transport, whom I have, by chance, got to know better since then, and I was never convinced that evasion was as high as the Department claimed. I do not wish to pretend that evasion does not occur. Obviously, it does. But the claim that about 11 per cent. of cars on the roads are without road fund licences has never withstood even the most cursory examination in a car park or wherever the idea to check a few cars flashes through one's mind. I have never believed that evasion is as high as that. I asked the then Minister where the statistics came from. Evidence that the statistics came from anything other than a not very accurate throw at a darts board was never adequately produced. Nevertheless, I do not wish to underestimate evasion, because £100 for a road fund licence is a large sum.

The matter is of great sensitivity in my constituency. I live 300 miles from the House. Little public transport exists in rural areas, such as my constituency, and, no matter what the Transport Bill does, there will never be a great deal of public transport in remote areas. It may exist between towns, but not in the countryside. The suggestion of a 38p increase on petrol to cover the money at present raised by the road fund licence must be carefully considered. Such a change would undoubtedly transfer taxation from people who must drive only a few miles to people who must travel many miles. Clearly, some of my constituents would benefit from that change as much as people in other areas, but generally speaking such a policy would transfer road fund taxation from London and the wealthy south-east to Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, the north-east and east Anglia. I hope that the Government will not take that course.

Unfortunately, the Committee did not have the power to investigate the virtue or otherwise of the Government's policy, which has increased the tax take on a gallon of petrol from 44 per cent. to 55 per cent. during the past six years. Nor did the Committee have the power to ask why the road fund licence has doubled in cost. Clearly, we can argue whether those levels of taxation are justified, but when we make such calculations we endlessly ignore the

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petroleum revenue tax which, as I occasionally point out, raises a further useful sum. If my constituents did not use the roads, there would be no petroleum revenue tax.

It would be useful if the Minister could today say that the idea of abolishing the road fund licence and transferring the tax to petrol, which would require an increase of between 30p and 38p per gallon, is out of court.

Mr. Latham: I wish to make it clear that the Committee did not recommend that course of action, and it was one of two alternatives suggested.

Mr. Penhaligon: I am aware of that, but it is one of those ideas that keeps popping up. I should like to give the Minister the opportunity of pushing it back into its particular pocket. On the face of it, the idea has great appeal. There is no point in denying that. However, it would be bad for remoter areas.

Finally, I wonder whether the way in which we review the reports on the Floor of the House could be changed so that more opportunities to debate them existed, but with a shorter period per subject. It is lunatic to think that a sensible intense debate will take place about such a volume of reports. The debate would be a shambles if every hon. Member raised every subject, and the poor Minister, who is not responsible for much of it, could not conceivably engage in the sort of in-depth rows which one may wish to have about these matters. Could not the House consider changing its procedures in favour of a series of short debates on specific reports as they arise with the Minister responsible present? If we had the responsible Ministers here today, the entire Cabinet and all the junior Ministers —about 120—would be present. Indeed, it would not be a bad idea to have 120 hon. Members present to discuss the report; but 120 Ministers would be beyond the pale.

I ask those responsible to consider the way in which we discuss and analyse this useful work. The present procedure is not the most sensible or rational way, and a review on the Floor of the House is inevitable if the work is to be taken seriously and is to be seen to be effective.

5.58 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), and immediately pick up his final point, which has great validity. It is ridiculous that the House is invited to consider some 40 reports of the Public Accounts Committee with a gentle hint in the motion that hon. Members should restrict themselves to about seven of them.

As a member of the PAC, I am well aware that because of the valiant efforts of our respected Chairman, to whom I add my tribute, we get time to debate these matters on the Floor of the House. However, it is usually towards the end of a week and often approaching a recess or some other occasion when the attention of hon. Members may not be devoted to the affairs as closely as it may otherwise be.

I have been keeping careful note of the attendance this afternoon. For most of the time about 15 hon. Members have been present, of whom four are not members of the Committee. Where are the other 635 Members of Parliament who, on every occasion possible both inside and outside the House, pay such attention to obtaining value for money, and who press the Government hard on that? It is sad that so few of them have chosen to attend this afternoon. It was nice to listen to the hon. Member for Truro, with his usual attractive delivery and sense of fun, and to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who added to the comments made by members of the Committee.

I wish to speak on three of the reports, the first being the 13th report of the 1983-84 Session on the evasion and enforcement of vehicle excise duty. That matter needs to be drawn to the attention of both the House and our constituents. Vehicle excise duty — or VED as it is called in Committee — is paid on all mechanically propelled vehicles kept on public roads, but not on those kept off public roads. The two categories cause a problem.

The Comptroller and Auditor General drew the Committee's attention to the large amount of revenue estimated to be lost through evasion of VED. He spoke about the difficulties of enforcing the current system and about alternative arrangemens that have been considered, but rejected, on several occasions by both the previous and present Administrations. That includes the rejection of an increase in petroleum revenue tax that would obtain the revenue while abolishing the licence.

We all know that such extensive evasion cannot be measured precisely because the driver vehicle licensing centre does not monitor periods when vehicles are kept off the roads and so are not liable to duty. However, the Department of Transport survey indicates an evasion level of 7 per cent. to 9 per cent. for cars and 10 per cent. to 13 per cent. for goods vehicles and motor cycles. In 1982-83, that level of evasion would have resulted in a substantial loss of revenue of about £100 million compared with net proceeds from the tax of about £1,800 million.

To enforce VED, the Department of Transport relies on reports of apparent offences from police officers and traffic wardens. The tracing of offenders is hindered because two thirds of the reports contain no names and addresses. Up to 7·5 per cent. of the central vehicle records is out of date through the delay or failure of motorists to notify changes. That is a substantial figure. We are told that enforcement is to deter evasion rather than to ensure full compliance. The Department's work in 1983 resulted in the recovery of £14·6 million.

When examining witnesses from the Department, the Committee was told that, although the maximum fine for the evasion of duty on cars is £425, the average fine imposed by the courts is only £33·60. The witnesses also observed that the proportion of offenders electing to pay the Department a mitigated penalty fell from 60 per cent. in 1976 to 38 per cent. in 1983.

I asked one witness from the Department, Mr. Lazarus, whether he thought that if the maximum fine were increased substantially that would have a desirable effect. He replied:

> "I do not myself see any valid relationship between the £425 which is available now and the figure which I quoted to the Committee of the average fine last year which is as low as £33·6."

I then asked him whether, if there were a minimum penalty that the courts could impose, that would be higher than the average penalty imposed in 1983. He agreed that, if Parliament legislated to provide for a minimum penalty, that would obviously help a great deal. I think that the appropriate Government officers should consider that.

The loss of revenue of between £70 million and £100 million, with net proceeds of tax being £1,800 million, is a very serious matter. It is ridiculous that the courts should

impose an average penalty of only £33·60. With the risk of detection not being very great, it is little wonder that some people—about 882,000 in 1983—conclude that it is a good deal cheaper to pay the fine if caught than to pay the £100 duty now being demanded. The position is becoming ridiculous. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will discuss the matter with my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor with a view to reminding magistrates of the need for fines to act as a real deterrent and to use the penalties available.

Our constitutents are being ripped off by those tax evaders who use their cars on public roads but do not want to pay their duty. I dare say that about £100 million a year would be a very welcome addition to, for example, the social security budget or the overseas aid vote—about which we have heard so much from our constituents during this week when they lobbied us about fighting poverty. Rather than putting 30p or more a gallon on the cost of fuel, we should consider penalties to enforce the existing system.

Another way to improve the detection of evasion would be to change the current system of vehicle registration which makes it difficult to trace offenders because the records are out of date. Why do we not move to the system adopted by Canada and a number of other countries, where an individual has the same registration number throughout his motoring lifetime? The licence plate must carry either the current excise licence stickers, or be replaced annually with another bearing the year of issue. That would get away from cars having to bear a new prefix in August, with the consequent enormous bulge in the delivery of new cars during that month and all the problems that flow from that. The whole question of how we license vehicles should be considered as a matter of urgency by the Department.

I come now to the 33rd report on the economy of stores support, to which the Chairman of the Committee and other hon. Members have referred. The Committee looked at evidence on a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, dealing mainly with stores supplied through central depots. Those stores provide materials to the armed forces as part of a world-wide operation involving enormous assets and heavy operating and capital costs.

We have already heard this afternoon that the stores retain stocks with an approximate replacement book value of more than £5 billion spread over 2·5 million inventory items, and each year issue stores valued at £1,700 million. Overall, stock levels represent three years' normal peacetime issue. The Committee was told that the ranges of individual stores show stock levels of up to seven years peacetime issue, and even higher levels for some parts of some ranges.

Although the Ministry of Defence did not believe that total stockholding was too high, it accepted that in areas within the total figure there were, for a variety of reasons, excessive stocks. The Committee was informed, however, that the general level of overstocking was likely to be much higher than the Ministry had in the past thought.

Reference has been made to the Donnington fire and the substantial amount of material destroyed there. It has been said that, of the £169 million worth of stocks destroyed, £37 million worth was obsolete, that £21 million worth was due to be withdrawn and that £26 million worth represented "falling demand", in that the original calculations were wrong, so that there had been a further category of over-provision in respect of original purchases.

While the House appreciates that obsolescence occurs, there should, surely, within the Ministry of Defence be an efficient computerised system to ensure that large stocks of obsolete or semi-obsolete equipment are not held. I am not satisfied that such an efficient computerised system exists. Indeed, in answer to a question that I put to Sir Clive Whitmore, the permanent secretary to the Department, I was told:

> "Your concern is absolutely right and it is one which the Department as a whole shares."

He went on to tell the Committee:

> "Supply Managers are now considering the introduction of a standard system for setting surplus stock warning levels."

Sir Clive also referred to a study group looking into the causes of surpluses. That work should now have been completed. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate he will say what has been the outcome of those two courses of action.

We are told by the Treasury in the 33rd report that the Ministry of Defence agrees that, with such a large range of stores, there are bound to be excessive stocks in some areas but that it does not agree that the level of stocks is generally too high. Why should we be given what appears to be such a complacent reply from the Treasury?

In receiving evidence, the Committee was told that an example of obsolescent stores was the Larkspur range of thermionic radio valves, a range which had been replaced by a system called Clansman. Another category, valued at £21 million, was of stores close to withdrawal from the service but which had not quite reached the withdrawal point. A further category, known by the Ministry of Defence as "falling demand," amounted to a further £26 million. Yet another category, worth £13 million, was of stores where the Ministry of Defence had over-provisioned in its initial purchases.

There were also a couple of miscellaneous categories—sort of throw away lines—one described as £7 million worth of "all-time buys," being buys of stores at the outset of their life. There was also £8 million worth of stores held against possible sales to overseas countries. About that item we are told simply, "We have lost those".

The Treasury's replies on this issue have not been adequate. Nor do they reflect the concern that the Committee expressed. These are vital matters for the taxpayer because we are dealing not with hundreds of millions of pounds but with £5 billion worth of stores. Obsolesent valves, radio sets and other equipment of various types worth £20 million here and £20 million there should not be cluttering up the stores of our armed services.

If we had a proper system of control using all the modern equipment at our disposal, such a situation would not exist. The Committee was deeply concerned about that, and I hope that the Minister will agree that the Treasury's reply has been less than adequate.

We make it clear in paragraph 6 of our report that the Ministry of Defence has agreed to consider the wider lessons that might be learnt about stores inventory as a whole. What lessons has the Ministry learnt and what assurance has the taxpayer that surplus and obsolete stores will not be held at great public expense?

What reduction in the percentage of overall stocks has the Ministry been able to achieve and how much will be saved? What arrangements is the Ministry making for identifying the full acquisitioning and holding costs of stocks and to ensure that such information is taken into

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account on a regular basis by those responsible for ordering stocks, for reviewing them, for maintaining stock levels, for arranging disposals and for otherwise managing stores?

What arrangements are to be made for keeping Parliament regularly informed on these issues? There is reference to that in the report from the Treasury, but I am not encouraged greatly by it because it does not say how Parliament will be informed and how we shall have the opportunity to examine the information provided.

What is to happen to stores that become surplus to requirements in the Falklands? Will they be dumped at sea or are they being sold to the islanders, who could make good use of them? I know from two visits that I paid to the Falklands that an old Land Rover in the hands of an islander can rapidly be rebuilt and provide a serviceable vehicle for many years to come. A great deal of aviation fuel is stored in the Falklands. That, after a time, becomes surplus to requirements. Is it being dumped at sea? Could it be used more effectively by the islanders?

The 20th report for the Session 1984-85 deals with arrangements for delivering social security benefits. The 30 separate benefits involved the payment of nearly £31 billion in 1984. The delivery of those benefits resulted in the employment of over 80,000 staff, plus 27,000 people in the Department of Employment. The cost of delivering the benefits to those entitled to them was £1·328 million, an enormous sum. The Committee has been considering ways by which the cost of delivering benefits could be reduced, with consequent benefit to the recipients.

There are four methods by which benefits are delivered. The most common is the post office order book. That accounts for 88 per cent. of deliveries. There are Giro cheques, payable orders and the recently introduced automated credit transfer, which accounts for only 0·5 per cent. of payments. That involves payment direct by the DHSS into a bank or other account—for instance, a building society account—by the automated transfer of funds using computer-produced magnetic tape.

When the Rayner scrutiny examined this matter, the team came to the conclusion that a substantial sum could be saved, and the figure of £50 million was mentioned. The scrutiny team recommended the introduction of direct crediting, a reduction in the frequency of benefit payments and a simplification in administration.

The team noted that the United Kingdom and Irish Republic were alone among the 13 countries considered in paying a high proportion of benefits weekly by order books. We are, therefore, in a unique situation; as a country, we seem to be locked into what has almost become a way of life—the paying of benefits by order books at post offices. The Select Committee on Social Services looked at the matter and substantially endorsed the recommendations, one of which was that benefits be paid less frequently. However, the Government took the view that it was not right to make people change to less frequent payments as many people find them inconvenient.

Behind the questions about whether we should make payments by order in post offices, frequency and so on there is the point that 75 per cent. of the income of the average rural post office comes from social security payment work. There would come a point when the DHSS could not continue to take away work from those post offices without paying them more for the remaining functions.

We should not retain the expensive and rather old-fashioned method of paying pensions through an order book merely to maintain the rural post office system. I see hon. Members nodding in agreement. We all want to maintain rural post offices as they are an important part of the fabric of our society. It may be public policy to maintain post offices, but they should be subsidised by some other method, rather than that we should continue with this old-fashioned way of paying benefits.

The Select Committee on Social Services recommended that, as an inducement, pensioners accepting ACT should be paid two weeks in advance and two weeks in arrears rather than four weeks in arrears. This method was rejected by the Government on the ground that it would cost £50 million and that they had hoped that changes could be achieved without incurring extra cost.

In Committee, we took note of the fact that no assessment had been made of the additional savings that would accrue, although it had been estimated that ACT payments would cost £2 a year each, as against £10 for paying pensions over the post office counter by means of an order book. I understand that the latest estimate is that ACT will cost £6 a year and order books £16. That is a substantial annual cost, and the DHSS should give fresh consideration to the ways and means of offering direct financial inducements—for example, a cash payment of £10 to encourage beneficiaries to change to more effective methods of payment.

I believe that I am right in saying that only 27 per cent. of pensioners do not have a bank account. That is a different picture from that of a few years ago when it was commonly said that half the British population was unbanked. The number of those without a bank account is shrinking more and more, and as it does so, so the opportunity will come to switch more and more people to ACT and to move over to less frequent payments.

I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services a parliamentary question earlier this year about the possible cash savings to his Department

"that would be achieved in a full year on the assumption that pensions were paid by automated credit transfer to those pensioners who on the latest information available to him have a bank account."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. *137*.]

The answer was, £70 million a year. In answer to another of my parliamentary questions, I discovered that that was equivalent to increasing the Christmas bonus by just over 70 per cent. If everybody were paid by ACT, the Department would have the option either of increasing the Christmas bonus—something for which hon. Members call from time to time—or of using it as a direct financial inducement for people to switch to ACT. That should be discussed, considered and acted upon.

The Department should do something about giving great publicity to the relative costs of different methods of payment to encourage the adoption of the cheapest method of payment. None of us has seen a Government commercial on television pointing out the real costs. I feel sure that if there were some action by the Department and an attempt to persuade people, in the public interest, to switch to reduce costs, there would be a bigger take up.

This is one of the important reports of the PAC and, although it is not on the short list for discussion in the

motion, I felt that, nevertheless, it was worth mentioning. I hope that somewhere in the depths of the Treasury some friendly soul will take account of my points. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will be leading the Treasury in some useful reforms. Big money is involved, and it is well worth my hon. Friend taking a little time to study reforms, as they will bring benefit not only to the taxpayer but to the pensioner as well.

6.25 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): It is a privilege for me, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, to take part in this debate. The information contained in the reports is of immense value to hon. Members and to the general public if they are concerned about value for money as it is spent by various Departments. That is why the Committee meets and considers the numerous papers and voluminous reports that are received—work that must continue. I shall always be pleased to take part in the work of the Committee.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) spoke about the low attendance in the Chamber for the debate on the reports. I agree that a better attendance would be of value to hon. Members so that they could take part in the debate and listen to it.

However, it is not just hon. Members who are absent this afternoon. The Press Gallery is empty as well. Therefore, information that could be passed on to a wider public will not be unless the points are picked up through the *Official Report*. I do not point a finger only at the absent hon. Members. If the press is interested in the work of the House, it should be taking note of the reports from the PAC.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) referred in general terms to all the seven reports listed in the motion. We all take great interest in them and there is need for some urgent action to be taken to remedy the defects. The problem was highlighted in the meetings of the PAC when we questioned witnesses.

One of the most important problems is economy of store support in the Ministry of Defence. It is rather amusing to hear and read some of the replies given to questions. I hope that some deep interest and concern will be taken by the Department of Defence and in particular by the Secretary of State because there is an urgent need for a review of what is happening to stores collected by the Department.

I wish to refer to two of the Public Accounts Committee reports, the first being the report on regional industrial incentives. The PAC observations have been noted by the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that they will be acted upon and that the Government will consider the matter in the light of their forthcoming decision on the 1984 White Paper relating to regional industrial incentives.

The PAC report welcomes the establishment of a single main aim for regional industrial policy: the reduction of regional imbalance in employment opportunities. This aim can be used to assess the effectiveness of that policy. There is high unemployment in my region. It contains many empty factories and pits are being closed. I hope that the Department will note the concern expressed by the PAC about the regional imbalance in employment opportunities. The distribution of incentives is unfair and unjust. Unemployment in some regions is between 15 and 20 per cent., yet they receive no aid. On the other hand, regions which do not suffer from high unemployment receive substantial aid.

Reference has been made to the provision of different types of aid. We must consider whether the various schemes that have been established are providing job opportunities. The enterprise zones are causing difficulties. Certain concessions are enjoyed by factories in enterprise zones. However, factories which may be only just outside an enterprise zone enjoy no such concessions. This is unjust and it needs to be investigated.

The Government ought to consider helping local government to create job opportunities. Instead of reducing resources, I hope that the Government will provide local government with additional resources to help them to create jobs.

The five year period which, it is suggested, should elapse before there is a full review of the effectiveness of providing job opportunities is, in the opinion of the Committee, far too long. It considers that there should be a full review of the effectiveness of regional industrial incentives before the end of five years. Academic studies of regional industrial policies have revealed various impacts upon different industries. The report refers to those studies. They reveal that the creation of jobs in motor engineering, instrumental engineering and electrical engineering has produced some results. However, the Government should also consider those areas where industry has been run down. The textile and clothing industries have suffered. Thousands of jobs have also been lost in the mining and heavy engineering industries. There is an imbalance in the amount of assistance that is provided to these areas. I hope that the Government will take note of the Committee's report and will consider providing further assistance to them.

One also has to consider the loss of jobs in the support industries. When a pit, clothing factory or textile mill closes, jobs are lost in the support industries. The number of jobs lost in a factory can be doubled because of the loss of jobs in the support industries.

The report also refers to the aid that is given to the chemical industry and states that, instead of creating jobs, it has had the opposite effect. In the period referred to in the report, more than 20,000 jobs were lost after the introduction of the incentive scheme. This matter needs to be investigated. Incentives are provided to create jobs, yet we find that they are being used to reduce the number of jobs. I call upon the Department of Trade and Industry to accept the PAC's recommendations and to use the job opportunity figures as a means of assessing the effectiveness of incentives. The only way to assess whether value for money is being obtained is to compare incentives with the number of jobs created.

The Department of Health and Social Security housing benefit scheme is now in operation. The previous schemes caused concern because they were difficult to understand. People had to visit various offices to satisfy themselves that they were getting what they were entitled to. The supplementary benefit section of the DHSS made provision for rent and rate rebates for people in receipt of supplementary benefit payments. Running alongside the supplementary benefit scheme was the local authority rebate scheme which also provided rent and rates rebates for council house tenants.

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It was in the financial interests of many tenants to opt out of one scheme and to take advantage only of the other. Many of them lost benefit because they were receiving the wrong type of payment. The schemes were difficult to understand and in many cases were unfair. The new scheme, which caters for all people entitled to rent and rate rebates, is to be welcomed.

In the 1970s the DHSS considered alternative schemes to overcome the unfairness and difficulties. The housing benefit scheme came into operation in April 1983. The original intention of the Department was to help claimants who had difficulty in identifying which of the previous schemes was better for them. By 1983 the emphasis had changed and the DHSS wanted to reduce the number of civil servants on its payroll.

The members of the Public Accounts Committee were concerned about the hasty introduction of a scheme whose obvious purpose was to implement cuts in public expenditure by reducing the number of civil servants on the payroll of the DHSS. The hasty introduction of the scheme created problems for claimants and for local government employees. It should be noted that only a year after the introduction of the scheme the Secretary of State for Social Services found it necessary to set up a review body.

As a member of a local authority at the time the scheme was introduced, I am well aware of the difficulties that arose because of the way in which the DHSS shoved files, names and addresses at local authorities. There was a publicity campaign about the scheme but local authorities were not familiar with the details. Because of problems in identifying relevant areas there was chaos. Substantial arrears had to be paid in many cases. Local authorities had made provision to deal with the administration of the scheme by computer. The DHSS did not have computer facilities in its supplementary benefit section to cope with housing benefits. That created problems for the local authorities. I hope that the problems will be overcome before the publication of the report that the Secretary of State called for.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General said:

"In February 1984 the Government announced an independent review of the structure and scope of the Scheme with the aim of simplifying it, ensuring that help is concentrated on those most in need and improving its administration . . . DHSS . . . had also taken steps to assist Authorities by simplifying the administrative task in a number of areas and are considering others in consultation with Local Authority Associations."

I commend that. I hope that there will be an improvement in the scheme which will help claimants in receipt of housing benefit. The sixth report of the PAC said:

"DHSS issued guidelines to help Authorities identify eligible claimants over pensionable age. DHSS consider the guidelines have been very successful and that in about 70 per cent. of cases referred to DHSS by Authorities benefit was payable."

We are talking about a 70 per cent. success rate which was acceptable to the DHSS. The report continues:

"However, one of the weaknesses of the Scheme has been that DHSS do not know how many cases Authorities fail to identify. DHSS have not managed to devise guidelines for non-pensioners because there is such a variety of circumstances that no rough rule-of-thumb would identify them."

I emphasise that point.

"DHSS told us"—

that is the Public Accounts Committee—

"that only about 200,000 people are receiving the Supplement out of an estimate of nearer half a million who might have been entitled to it."

That is a serious point. Some claimants are losing because the Department has not done its homework. Because of the haste with which the scheme was introduced, only 200,000 claimants out of 500,000 were receiving benefits. I hope that that injustice will be put right. The Committee has said that it would support an attempt to simplify the scheme and make it more equitable. I hope that the scheme will be reviewed to make sure that the present unfairness and injustices are erased.

In addition to the review body set up by the Secretary of State for Social Services, a social security review is taking place and, as hon. Members are aware, a Green Paper was published in June. That review will also consider housing benefits and the payment of housing benefits. The Green Paper also refers to simplifying the scheme and making it more equitable and to the scheme being made fairer for claimants and easier for the people who administer it.

The Minister said that housing benefit goes too far up the income scale. The Secretary of State also says that in the Green Paper. We are told that, if the proposals in the Green Paper are accepted—the proposals which have been submitted for consultation—between £500 million and £750 million will be taken from housing benefit payments. In other words, in addition to the report from the Public Accounts Committee, and in addition to the Secretary of State's review on the present system, we are told that housing benefits will be reviewed by the social services and that there could be a benefit reduction of over £500 million.

I hope that the proposals in the Green Paper to reduce housing benefit to claimants is not a means of putting right what the DHSS did wrong at the beginning. I hope that money will not be taken out of the housing benefit scheme to reduce the work load and ultimately the number of people administering the scheme. I hope that the House will not let that happen.

The work of the Public Accounts Committee will continue, and I should like to offer my congratulations to the Chairman on his work on behalf of the Committee. I hope that the new way of presenting the reports to the House will continue and that in future we shall have better support from the Press Gallery so that we can at least be sure that the work done and the contributions made by hon. Members will be made known to a wider audience.

6.54 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I should like to take up one or two of the points made by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). The report with which I propose to deal is the one on regional industrial incentives, and it is perhaps appropriate to begin with the recommendations of the Committee. Of course, we must bear in mind that this report was published on 11 June 1984, and a great deal has happened since then.

Many of the failures of the past have been rectified by the new scheme which the Government introduced subsequent to the publication of the report. There is a recognition of the fact that £20 billion of public money spent over the 20 years prior to 1982 created new jobs in the regions at a cost of £32,000 per job. That cannot be regarded as in any way efficient or cost-effective, and that fact was recognised by the Government in changing the

basis for the payment of regional grant from a capital base to a base of job creation. Since then we have seen the development of two schemes, one on the basis of £3,000 per job, basically for small and labour-intensive businesses, and the other on the basis of £10,000 per job for larger businesses, in which the investment which qualifies for grant is much higher.

I see from the recommendations of the report that the Government have introduced grant-aid into the service sector. It has been said many times in the House that the service sector holds the greatest promise for the greatest creation of jobs. In future the Committee could look at the effectiveness of regional industrial incentives and at the expansion of the areas for service sector grant to see how that grant could most effectively be spent. At the moment, the areas available for service sector growth are limited and could be expanded a great deal.

A third criticism which has been met since this report was published is on the use of the European regional development fund. Before the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act was enacted in the last Session, regional development grant was not linked to the European regional develoment fund. However, because the basis of grant is now job creation the two have been linked in a much more logical and efficient way, and that meets some of the comments made in the report.

Along with many hon. Members who represent assisted areas, I welcome the conclusions in this report which, loosely spelt out, are that, effectively, a regional development policy is necessary. In those areas where industry is declining but the community infrastructure is still in existence, it is obviously much more sensible, in cost-effective terms, to create new industries in those areas rather than develop new communities, with the all-attendant infrastructure that must go with them. Perhaps in future the Committee could look at regional development rather than consider only new towns. Such a policy could be targeted at the recovery of urban areas, and particularly those old industrial revolution cities in the north of England which now suffer badly from inner city decay.

Something else that the Committee could consider is the transport of grants, if I may use that loose phrase. Many of the new towns attracted industry because of the grants that were available. One of the great fears of hon. Members who represent new towns is that after a time, having taken advantage of those grants, companies move to greener pastures where other grants are available. Careful scrutiny of money spent like that can avoid abuses. A job may be created in a new town or in an enterprise zone, and it can then be recreated or moved to another assisted area where it will attract new grant. That perhaps is a matter which the Committee could consider carefully.

There is a plethora of agencies assisting regional development. We have partnership schemes, urban development corporations, new towns corporations, the Commission for the New Towns, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Welsh Development Agency, assisted areas, enterprise zones, county council enterprise schemes, various enterprises agencies and a vast infrastructure of assistance.

Perhaps we should consider how to streamline the system or to reform it by targeting the available resources most efficiently on the areas of greatest need. It has been suggested that we should examine which regions need help most and consider whether they should have regional development agencies. That would be welcomed in the north-west, where many of us would like to have such an agency dealing specifically with the assisted areas in the region. That would be cost efficient and would gather together many of the assistance schemes that I have mentioned.

Such a development would also avoid a company that wishes to expand having to travel from one assisted area to another seeking the best offer of rent and rate relief, capital grants and so on before deciding where to settle. At present, we see one assisted area bidding against another, even within the same region. Perhaps a streamlining of the system could avoid that. Many of us in the north-west are driven mad when we see on television a Welsh choir singing against the backdrop of a film of Snowdonia and the Welsh hills. We know that our development corportions, new towns and partnership schemes have nothing like that sort of advertising budget to attract people to look seriously at what we have on offer. We must try to iron out such problems, and perhaps the creation of regional development agencies is the only answer.

Mention has been made of the American system of tax incentives for regional development. Perhaps we should consider that carefully, but I emphasise that many of the companies that I have visited and those that have sought my assistance were short of capital and did not have the profits on which to claim tax allowances. They were looking to expand and to buy new machinery to create jobs. Tax incentives would not be a great help to them.

The Public Accounts Committee could also examine the administration of regional development schemes. The manuals are extremely complex and often drive away some applicants. If applicants are not to be put off by the manuals, they need the help of efficient officers in the enterprise agencies and the small firms bureau at the Department of Trade and Industry to find their way through them.

Those who administer the schemes, particularly in the north-west, are inundated with applications. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will note that in Liverpool it takes four or five months to get a decision on a regional development grant. That is a long time for a small business that has grown out of the enterprise allowance scheme, is looking to take on people and has customers waiting for orders. Six months from the date of application to the payment of grant is a long time in the development of a small business. Perhaps we should consider seriously the more efficient use of manpower in the processing of applications, particularly in Liverpool.

Time is of the essence in the development of small businesses, and I am sure that both sides of the House agree that if we are to get large-scale economic recovery the small business sector is the one from which it will come.

The Government have created a mega-department, the Department of Employment, drawing together all the job-creating agencies. Perhaps it would be sensible to consider taking into the Department the regional development agencies and the payment of regional development grants. They are part of a job-creating policy which aims to solve the major problem that we face, and perhaps they should be taken away from the DTI. Lord Young might welcome the opportunity to draw those responsibilities into his net.

The PAC report says:

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

"Five years is a long time to wait to start a full review of effectiveness of the revised incentives; research studies should be put in hand earlier than this".

If there is one profound conclusion of the report, that must be it. Five years is far too long to wait, and it is clear from the criticisms voiced in this debate that an early examination of the effectiveness and administration of grants is needed. I commend that view to the House.

7.7 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I should like to take up what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said about regional policy, but I shall resist the temptation. I only hope that no one will follow his advice to transfer the payment of grant from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Scottish Office to the Department of Employment. We have enough difficulties already.

I shall concentrate on the 24th report of the PAC in 1984-85, which deals with the dockyards, and couple it with the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence in this Session. We are talking about efficiency, and I make the mild suggestion that we should reconsider how we deal with these reports.

We have seen in the House a contrast between today and yesterday. The House was operating as a debating chamber yesterday, with the cut and thrust of highly charged political debate, with a large number of hon. Members present. It was enjoyable and, on occasions, enlightening, and the media lapped it up.

Today, we are dealing with a plethora of reports and there is an absence of cut and thrust. For example, the 24th report of the PAC, which is Government dominated—rightly so, given the way that we do things—was a unanimous report. Like the report of the Select Committee on Defence, it looked searchingly at the control and operations of the dockyards, a subject on which we have also had a plethora of reports in the past 10 to 15 years. All have suggested changes. All have questioned the efficiency of the Government. But for the first time we have a Government very clearly preferring an option—a commercial option—which came to us almost out of the blue and emanated from a rather sparse study undertaken by Mr. Peter Levene who, at the time of the study, was a specialist adviser to the Secretary of State.

One of the things that we expect, if we labour in Select Committees, is to be listened to by the Departments concerned. We do not expect them to fall over backwards to agree with the strictures of either the Public Accounts Committee or the Select Committee on Defence, but we expect to be listened to.

The Public Accounts Committee had a Government majority as, of course, did the Select Committee on Defence. The latter has some very well known Left-wingers on it. The Chairman is a former Minister, the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) is a former Minister, and there are several other former Ministers, including some who have been concerned with defence. That Committee overwhelmingly questioned the Government's preferred option.

But what happened? Almost before those Committees had submitted reports to the House—to be fair, a little time elapsed—the Secretary of State for Defence came along on 24 July and said, "No matter, we are going on. I am going on with the preferred option."

A management team is currently devoting valuable time ushering certain contractors through the dockyards. Some of us have the names of those firms. Perhaps the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will tell the House the names of the firms that are going through the dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport at the present time. The Government have commissioned a voluminous report by Touche Ross, showing what assets can be hawked round.

All this is against the background of the reports of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence. It means that Members have, in a way, laboured in vain. I hope that I am wrong. I am an eternal optimist. Even at this juncture I hope that the Financial Secretary, who is really, if I may say so, a pragmatic type of gentleman, will ask himself, as he certainly ought, whether we will get value for money, whether it really is efficient and whether it will work. Will the Government's preferred option of commercialisation work?

Perhaps I can explain briefly what this preferred option desires to do. The idea is to keep the capital assets of these dockyards in the public domain so that they will still have the stricture of a vote. The Ministry of Defence and the Treasury will still have their hands on that vote. The concept then is to create two companies, one for Devonport and one for Rosyth, which will be labour-only companies. We will put the labour of the dockyards into two companies for which outside contractors will bid. They will bid for the companies and they will bid for the Navy contracts, or a substantial proportion of the refit and maintenance work allocated through the Navy Board.

The Public Accounts Committee has examined this matter. I pay tribute, as others have done, to the work of the PAC. I was a member in a previous incarnation, and I am in a way sorry that I did not enjoy the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), but I served under earlier Chairmen who are not now in the House. One was Joel Barnett, now Lord Barnett, who is in another place. They were excellent Chairmen, who gave valuable service to the PAC. We have asked in both these Committees whether it will work.

In the evidence given to the Select Committee on Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), a former Defence Minister, at question 411, asked:

"Would you describe this Government's preferred option as a high risk option?"

Dr. Harte, of the Ministry of Defence, replied:

"Those are the words I used and I would stand by them. What I was implying was, if you ranked the proposals which are now put in by the Government in order of risk, then I think it is true that the commercial management option is at the top of that list. On the other hand, if you ranked them in order of potential financial benefits, the commercial management option is already at the top."

So it is a high risk giving notionally high rewards.

What are these high rewards? What does the Public Accounts Committee say about the nature of these rewards? I quote from its report, paragraph 10:

"We note that the net savings may be as little as 3 per cent. of the total Dockyard annual operation costs over a 10 year period, after allowing for the costs of implementing commercial management and the contractors' return on capital employed, although MOD stressed this was a worst case and expect that they will be higher and will increase after 10 years. Over and above those from the Interim Management Measures . . . the savings may be as little as 1 per cent."

There is an additional submission showing certain figures that are being submitted in answer and that is cited on page 6. There is a supplementary note by the witnesses which

gives some additional information. Nevertheless, savings are really minuscule and not backed up by any figures whatsoever.

What are we putting at risk? We are putting at risk the ability to put to sea a viable naval force in any and all circumstances that might prevail. That is a large consideration.

I know that the Public Accounts Committee does not normally undertake visitations. I do not think that the practice has altered since I was a member. Its members take the view that their responsibility is to hear witnesses, take evidence and come to their conclusions. The Select Committee on Defence does not have that circumspection. We have visited certain dockyards. Yesterday some of my colleagues and I visited Portsmouth. Here the Government have taken a different view of operations. They closed Chatham and ran down Portsmouth, but even there one can see the complexity of refitting vessels. Some of the Ministers ought to visit the dockyards. I do not suggest that they do so in the next week, because they may get a pretty rough handling if they go to Devonport or Rosyth. But if they go even to Portsmouth — and I say it with no disrespect to Portsmouth—they will see the complexity of the procedure.

We were on a County class destroyer yesterday—a rather old ship. There is no way that that type of ship could be put out to a commercial yard. It may be that the Chief of Fleet Support and Rear Admiral George or the Chief Executive, Royal Dockyards, will contradict me, because I have been rather a long time away from this as a Clydeside fitter. But let us see the sort of test that the Government have made. They have asked for a compex examination. That is what they call it. They have put out for private tender an Oberon class submarine, Euryalus, and they will then be able to make some comparisons. However, these comparisons will not be available until after 1987. The full evidence will not be available either to the House or to the Department until that time.

What has happened to the Otter? When we questioned Rear Admiral George in the Select Committee on Defence we heard the tale of the Otter's propeller. The work could not be done in a commercial yard. Rosyth is having to deal with HMS Red Pole. The estimate for that work at Rosyth was 20 weeks, so it was decided to put the work out to Richards, a commercial yard, where the work could be done in 16 weeks. The deficiencies after the commercial yard had had a go were so mind-boggling that it was decided to try to send the ship to Rosyth.

I do not excuse my trade union colleagues, but, not unnaturally, the boys and girls in the yard resented that. The Government have ideas of how to proceed with the dockyards, but they are completely untested. No other country adopts their style and practice. The United States certainly does not. The Government are putting at risk the viability of our naval force.

Perhaps the Navy and the dockyards have had too cosy a relationship over the years. Perhaps the dockyard men have been trying to do a Rolls-Royce job to ensure that, to the best of their ability, when a ship goes to sea it never breaks down. That is erring on the right side and recognising that men's lives are at stake. That cannot be measured in terms of profit and return on capital. I know that we must press for efficiency, but that must be balanced against putting men's lives at risk and against back-up.

The Government do not even intend to examine carefully the lessons of Portsmouth. Perhaps the Select Committee on Defence is at fault because it did not examine the matter until a few days ago. The Select Committee as a whole has not yet taken a view. The Government are not awaiting the results from the Otter and Euryalus. The real culprit is the Secretary of State for Defence, although the Treasury is also involved because its aim is to reduce the number of civil servants. The main aim is to take people out of Civil Service employment and to put them in the private domain. The Government are not concerned with making the Navy more efficient.

I am a member of the Select Committee on Defence, but I have seen the work done by the PAC. I believe that the House and the nation should resent what is happening. The Government are paying no attention to the strictures of the senior Committee of the House—the PAC—or of the Select Committee on Defence on which they have a majority. The Committees do not take a political view. They are saying to the Government, "You have not proved your case, so, until you do, halt." We have had no response from the Government.

I suspect that the Gracious Speech will contain a commitment to introduce a Bill for the commercial management of the dockyards. Such commitments do the House and politics great harm. Government Members will troop dutifully through the Lobby in favour of that. Unfortuntely, many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and other hon. Members will not have read the reports and they will take a decision in accordance with the balance of political votes.

Two Commitees have said that the Government have not proved their case. I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne for not being present to hear the whole of his speech, but he said that some of the worst evidence that he had heard was about the dockyards. In the Select Committee on Defence only one of the many witneses was a non-MoD man. I cannot say that his evidence was good. It was a rather appalling support of the Government's case.

The Financial Secretary is responsible for the effectiveness of Government spending. He should examine what is happening and look at the end product. Is he willing to have all this on his conscience because of disruption in the yards, with no tangible benefits or savings?

Perhaps the Government are planning to privatise the Navy. I would not put that past them. Unless they plan to do that, they must remember that the customer is in the public sector and the assets will remain in the public domain. The Secretary of State's doctrinaire view puts at risk the effectiveness of the Navy as a fighting force. Anyone with any sense of patriotism or public responsibility should resist that.

7.27 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I wish to discuss the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its effect on exports, and the perennial topic of the National Health Service which I have now studied in the Public Accounts Committee for seven years.

I pay a personal tribute to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Committee. The PAC is one of the happiest of our Committees, and the right hon. Gentleman certainly keeps

[Mr. Michael Morris]

us working hard. I do not complain about that. Of all the work that I have done in politics, the work on that Committee is by far the most worthwhile.

It is disappointing that we have to debate 51 reports this evening. We are treating the work of our most senior Committee without proper deference. We do our best to analyse the evidence. We try to suggest practical solutions. Much of the cutting edge of our work is wasted because our reports are debated so long after they are made. However, we shall try to put in a few cutting edges this evening.

It is high time that the Comptroller and Auditor General, through the National Audit Office, modernised the presentation of his work in terms of green reports. These are now put out in a succinct and very readable form and the coverage given to them by the media has grown extensively.

I am as much a traditionalist as anybody, but the format in which we produce our reports is as boring as one could possibly find, and we have to be assiduous in working out exactly which report we are dealing with. The format is identical for all the reports. They are pretty unreadable, and I would say to the Chairman and his colleagues that I hope that that will be an urgent item for discussion at our meeting on Monday next and that we shall consider how the general accounting officer in the United States operates. He produces reports that are readable with recommendations that are on the cover. If we followed his example, more than the six or eight Members attracted to the debate tonight might be attracted in future.

The second report, the 15th report and the 21st report 1984-85 relate to helping the nation's exporters. Our reports are so often critical of what is happening in Departments of State that it is quite nice to pick up a report which is thin and in which the evidence is clear. The second report states in recommendation No. 15(1) on page vii:

"We consider that the C and AG's findings provide welcome assurance that the staffing of the Diplomatic Service has been, and is, scrutinised regularly and carefully."

We do not say that lightly, and we long for the day when we can say the same about the National Health Service or indeed about any other Department of State. It is to the credit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that it has accepted the strictures that the Committee made of it some years ago and that it got its act together. I pay tribute to the work that it has done.

The 15th report deals with the management of the overseas estate. Considerable progress has been made with it and we believe that further progress will come. I draw the Minister's attention to paragraph 14(v) of the 15th report's recommendations, which states:

"We regret the significantly reduced resources available to FCO for rationalisation and 'spend to save' proposals with a high rate of return. We think it unfortunate that opportunities for savings are being frustrated by an initial shortage of funds."

It is clear from that that the FCO has a much better grip on things than it has had for a long time. I think that the Treasury might relax its control a little in this area. As one who specialises in matters concerning south-east Asia, I am conscious that, had we had more men on the ground and progressed further the concept of a territorial commercial man, we should not have got into such a mess with the Thai bus contract, with every chance of losing it.

The 21st report on the ECGD deals with our exporters and is a most important and timely report. As hon. Members will know, the Minister of State has received recommendations for a review of ECGD. He did not accept all the recommendations that were put to him about the nature of the board, but he said that there were now full-time members on the board and that the result will be a swifter and more responsive service to exporters and, as he put it, more stimulating work for the staff.

It is a perennial worry for anyone at the Treasury to discover that the ECGD is making a substantial loss. My hon. Friend the Minister needs no reminding of that, but I hope that when the Treasury considers the report and the evidence of Mr. Gill and others it will recognise that it is perfectly right, proper and practical that commercial insurance risks should be run at a profit and certainly on nothing worse than a no-profit-no-loss basis but that there are times, a substantial number in today's world, when there is, as it were, political risk. In this context, I draw my hon. Friend's attention to paragraph 46(viii) of the summary of main conclusions, which reads:

"Guarantee facilities within ECGD's Trading Accounts which incur substantial losses, but which are necessary in the national interest, should be accounted for as public expenditure."

The details in paragraph 25 show that in that category of trade the loss was £68·2 million. In the other category, shown in paragraph 29, the loss was £87·7 million. We know that ATP, aid and trade provision, is still being reviewed three months after the initial announcement of its role. I put it to the Government that the £150 million spent on trading risks of a political nature is vital to the nation's exporters, and the House will do a great disservice to the nation if the availability of that cover is removed.

Having praised the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I come to my bête noir, the National Health Service. Here I must declare a number of interests in that I advise two pharmaceutical companies and am married to a full-time general practitioner. In this context, I wish to dip into a number of reports—Nos. 12, 16, 28 and 29 of 1983-84 and Nos. 17, 22 and 23 of 1984-85. I shall say no more than this for the pharmaceutical industry. Tackling the approximately 10 per cent. of NHS costs accounted for by the national drugs bill is fine and dandy, but it is no use ignoring the other 90 per cent., throwing one's hands up in despair and saying that because we do not know how to get at those costs we cannot do anything about them.

In relation to the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, I draw attention to just two issues. First, the parallel imports situation is covered in the 29th report of 1983-84. Paragraph 31(vii) of the recommendations states:

"The suggestion that the NHS has not been overcharged in respect of parallel imports of drugs in no way justifies chemists making large unintended profits at the taxpayer's expense, and DHSS should deal urgently with the problem on this basis."

That was printed on 9 July 1984, but to the best of my knowledge action taken on it has been almost nil. I did some telephoning on this yesterday and to my certain knowledge there are still parallel imports at 30 per cent. below the list price cost, the difference being pocketed by the large chemists doing the importing.

The 23rd report of 1984-85 makes a further important point about the PPRS stressing the importance of the Department receiving the main review body report for Government contracts before carrying out its negotiations with the industry. The DHSS previously did its own negotiation but, because of the other main body of

Government review contracts, we have the farcical situation that a non-pharmaceutical industry can get a better rate of return than someone under the PPRS.

The 28th report is about the procurement of NHS savings. The not insignificant sum of £60 million is available. However, we sadly report—these are pretty damning words—in 32(i) of the recommendations:

"The slow progress in securing available economies in the cost of NHS supplies represents a significant missed opportunity. It is lamentable that after nearly 30 years of effort by the NHS we are virtually starting from the beginning."

That sentence fills us with horror and it ought to fill every senior official in the DHSS, Ministers and shadow Ministers with absolute horror. It is not good enough to allow that situation to continue, and I hope that the Treasury will put pressure on the Department to sort this out.

It gives me some pride to state that only the Oxford region has virtually eliminated small stores. It is not often that, coming from Northampton, I praise the Oxford regional health authority but it has got something right. The DHSS informed the Committee that the target for centrally co-ordinated supplies was 80 per cent. to be achieved in 1984-85. I would love to know whether we got anywhere near 80 per cent. The £60 million is available without a great loss of sweat in the supplies area. If Sainsbury, Tesco or any other company were involved, it would soon be digging into that £60 million.

The 22nd report concerns energy conservation. First, I quote a few words of praise:

"We recognise the achievement made by the health service over the last ten years in securing energy savings totalling £379 million".

The Committee then goes on to say:

"But we have grave doubts as to whether the potential for further savings of £1,335 million in the next fifteen years will be realised".

"Grave doubts" is an understatement because the Department set up a scheme in 1977 with a great fanfare but which totally collapsed by 1981. We say it faltered. It is extraordinary that when we look, ask, question and probe we find that there is not one piece of guidance given by that Department to its regions for the whole of the period from 1979 to 1984. We forget too easily that 1979 was the middle of an oil crisis, yet the DHSS, despite that crisis, ignored the question of energy saving. In paragraph 7 we state that, in the view of the DHSS, it had delegated that responsibility to the districts and regions, but it is not adequate to delegate in such circumstances, given the Department's record.

I should like to know how near we came to achieving savings of £100 million, which was the Department's own target for 1984-85. My guess is that we had a miserable performance—I doubt whether we got halfway to it—so that leaves at least another £50 million to £100 million.

The report on the general dental services—the 17th—does not show any massive savings. It is right to place on record the Committee's view that, since 1979, dental health in Great Britain has continued to improve and should improve further. The vast majority of our dentists do a first class job for the nation in preventive dentistry. The Department, however, should respond to our recommendation that regulation 22 procedures—a spot check—should be done on those dentists who appear to be either over-providing or over-charging. A little activation of that would go a long way to solving the problems.

The 12th report makes very sorry reading. It is distressing that any Department of State can estimate cost savings from reorganisation of £8·6 million which turn out to be £54 million. That is an incredible difference, and the Committee is not even sure whether £54 million was an accurate figure. We were told that there were 4,000 posts to be saved. We do not know whether they were saved. All we know is that there were 3,000 premature retirements at fairly princely sums of money. Paragraph 29 of the report says:

"We must express our misgivings about the re-employment in the NHS of officers who have had the benefit of premature retirement terms. We welcome the review being undertaken by the Department and, whilst we can appreciate that re-employment could be an assistance to management, we consider that it should be very strictly controlled by the DHSS themselves."

That warning paragraph is just as relevant today, and I hope that it is brought to the attention of the authorities.

The 16th report for 1983-84 concerns manpower control. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) will have drawn attention to it. Recommendation 52(i) says:

"Progress by the health departments and health authorities in bringing NHS manpower under control has been quite inadequate".

That is an understatement. We were aiming for savings of £30 million from the reorganisation, but we are not sure whether we have achieved more than £10 million so far. We know that we have building defects to the tune of at least £30 million and that in terms of claims against contractors and professionals we have garnered the princely sum of £400,000 as at the date of our report, which was not so long ago.

I have tried to highlight the fact that there are several areas in the NHS, which is under a lot of pressure, where substantial savings can be made. I have to attend a meeting of my district health authority next Friday. It wants to close three wards, but when I look through its plans I find that they show every sign of the evidence that I have found in the PAC's reports — inadequate planning and inadequate tackling of what is no more than simple professional good management. The Treasury wants to save money. It is high time that it worked through some of our NHS reports because tens of millions of pounds are lying wasted. That is to the detriment of the whole nation. I hope that, if nothing else, I have stimulated my hon. Friend into reading those reports on the NHS.

7.49 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I shall confine myself to the 13th report of the PAC concerning the evasion and enforcement of vehicle excise duty. The Committee underlined the fact that circumstances up to 1982-83 were far from satisfactory. The report notes that between £135 million and £174 million of revenue is lost by people not carrying out their duty to license their road vehicles. It identifies the fact that, out of some 28 million vehicles that are in use or have been built in this country, 20 million are licensed, but 8 million are unaccounted for. The report states that most of the unaccounted for vehicles are laid up, awaiting sale or are not licensed but are being used regularly. This emphasises the unacceptability of the present situation.

The police make an effort to apprehend licence dodgers, but we have seen recently how difficult it is for the police to do that job adequately. We learnt a bitter

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lesson in Handsworth, where I believe the riot was started by a spot check on a vehicle that was not displaying a tax disc. Conversations that I have had with police officers suggest that they are hesitant about dealing with tax dodging within the inner city areas, for fear of starting something much more substantial in the form of civil disobedience. If the police are not prepared to do that, there are grounds for having a commissioned debt collecting agency, as there is a large amount of money for a private enterprise agency to collect on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

There was no shortage of ideas about how to combat the present situation, and there are two or three basic alternatives. One idea was to pass the tax on to the user in petrol prices, to make sure that everybody who used a car paid the equivalent of the vehicle excise duty. That would mean an increase of 31p per gallon on the price of petrol. The Government ruled that out because it would disadvantage many people in rural areas who do much higher mileage in daily commuting to schools, shops and so on.

Another alternative was to tax every vehicle, irrespective of whether it was used or laid up. That would be a much more simplified form of vehicle excise duty, but it was dismissed because it would be unfair on those who collect cars as a hobby, run museums or rarely use vehicles on the public highway. Surely a combination of alternatives can be arrived at to come up with an acceptable policy.

I am disappointed in the report because no active suggestion is made to help the Secretary of State for Transport develop an alternative strategy. Non-payment of the vehicle excise duty is not a declining problem, but is gradually increasing, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to enforce licensing in our inner city areas. It seems to me that we could evolve a system that would feature all the suggestions that have been made. It makes sense to have some form of road pricing by passing some of the vehicle excise duty cost on to a gallon of petrol. A petrol increase of 15p per gallon is small compared with how much petrol has gone up in the past two years—approximately 40p to 50p. That would be paid by everybody who uses a motor vehicle.

It is equally possible to have a standing charge for a car, much as we have a standing charge for electricity, gas and telephone. A standing charge for a vehicle would not be unreasonable.

There could be a standing charge of not more than £2 a month—about £20 a year—for the opportunity of having a vehicle to use on the highway. Were one to apply for a full vehicle excise licence, that would be at a cost of about £40 or £50 a year, bearing in mind the extra cost of petrol and the standing charge that would be paid.

Mr. Penhaligon: Should that sum be paid by the British Leyland factory in Birmingham on the cars that it has in store?

Mr. King: Of course not, just as British Leyland would not pay many other taxes when it produces a vehicle. This charge would be levied on the car only when it was handed over to the first keeper, and whether the car was laid up or put into a museum that person would still pay the standing charge.

For a museum or a collector, it would be possible to exempt any car built before 1960. Oddly enough, if some of the cost of everyday usage were passed on through a surcharge on the price of petrol, in many areas that could make all the difference between no public transport and viable public transport. As motoring costs would clearly increase in some cases, there would be an encouragement for the user to switch to some extent to public transport.

The report also draws attention to the identification of the relationship between the user of a vehicle and the keeper. All too often when people are apprehended for driving a vehicle without a vehicle excise licence it is discovered, after numerous investigations and inquiries, that the keeper claims that he knew nothing about the use of the vehicle on that particular day—that it had been taken without his permission, laid up, or its use had not been authorised. We must make a clear distinction between the user and the keeper.

A user is a person who can commit an offence for parking, speeding and so on. He would be liable for any fine or penalty. However, the keeper must be responsible for the roadworthiness of the vehicle and the presentation of a vehicle excise duty licence. Whoever the user may be, if a vehicle does not have such a licence, the keeper must be liable. If that point were made clear, it would cut out a lot of the time-wasting involved in establishing who is responsible for paying the vehicle excise duty. If there were a standing charge and a surcharge on the price of petrol, everyone would be contributing to vehicle excise duty, even though some of the dodgers might not pay the full amount of duty involved.

As the report also says, the fines that are levied are quite derisory. The average fine is about £33, yet the maximum is about £425. Very few people ever pay the maximum fine. As an example to others, we should ensure that it does not pay to fail to license one's car. There ought to be a recommendation that if a car is not licensed and the person is caught, that person should have to pay a great deal more than the cost of licensing the vehicle in the first place.

In the absence of punitive measures, people will continue to take the risk. As the report indicates, in many parts of the country it is common sense to take a chance and to drive a vehicle without a current vehicle excise disc on the windscreen. Our attention ought to be devoted to introducing a system to ensure that all road users pay their fair share of the cost of running a car and of providing the infrastructure that is necessary.

7.59 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): A notable feature of this debate has been the number of hon. Members who have taken part who are not members of the Public Accounts Committee. I have sat through several PAC debates and read the *Official Report* of others. But what struck me this evening was that, although there has been the traditional self-criticism of poor attendance in the Chamber, many non-members of the Public Accounts Committee have taken part in the debate. I shall refer to some of their speeches in my contribution.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) paid tribute to the work of his colleagues and noted that the Public Accounts Committee is one of the most demanding Committees of the House. On behalf of the Opposition, I thank all the Committee members, including those who have not been able to

contribute to the debate tonight but who contributed, in many cases with great distinction, to the deliberations of the Committee.

I join other right hon. and hon. Members who have congratulated and complimented my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. There is a certain ritual about thanks, but I have noticed tonight the warmth of the congratulations from Conservative Members. The hon. Members for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), who are all members of the PAC, have commented on the distinctive role of Chairman performed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. I would add to our appreciation of his work as Chairman that those of us who have served on the PAC for a few months recognise that, although an ordinary member of the Committee does a great deal of work, the amount of work undertaken by the Chairman is much greater.

We wish to express our appreciation of my right hon. Friend's lucid presentation of the reports this evening. It was clear from his contribution that he has given thought not only to the work done by the Committee but to the Committee's responsibilities, the way in which his duties should be discharged in future and the evolution of the work of one of the oldest and most historic Committees of the House. We shall study with care his remarks about the delicate relationship between Ministers and civil servants and how that is affected by the PAC.

I join hon. Members in expressing appreciation for the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General. I associate myself especially with the remarks of the hon. Member for Northampton, South. Similar sentiments have been expressed before on both sides of the House. Sometimes the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff must think that hon. Members pay only lip service to the importance of their work and the work of the PAC.

I also agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Northampton, South about the delay in debating the reports. The previous debate on the PAC reports took place more than 18 months ago in March 1984. There was a special debate more recently on the report on premature retirement in the National Health Service. I encourage such special debates. However, during our previous debate, hon. Members criticised the delay in debating the reports. On that occasion the delay was nearly two years, although it had been increased by the intervening general election. On this occasion we have had a gap of more than 18 months and we are debating the reports at the fag end of a Session.

Many hon. Members regret that we do not debate PAC reports more frequently so that they are still fresh and some contribution can be made to the decisions which must be taken by Ministers. In the previous debate, the Financial Secretary, who is to reply to this debate, promised to bring this point to the attention of the Leader of the House. I am sure that he did as he promised, but there has been no result. Hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to press the Financial Secretary again this evening, because the impression given is that the Government do not care enough about the PAC reports. I mean that they do not care enough to have them debated more frequently and more promptly after the reports are published, and to have subsequent debates. The Government's manifesto at the general election stated:

"We are determined that our public services should provide the best possible value both for people they seek to help and for the taxpayer who pays the bill."

One way to get value for money would be to debate the reports of the Public Accounts Committee, as we have seen tonight.

There has been a new development. In opening the debate, the Chairman of the PAC identified seven reports which he regarded as especially significant. Those reports were also identified, for the benefit of the House, on the Order Paper. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friend would agree that almost every report merits its own debate and that we need more debates on individual subjects, as happened with the report on premature retirement in the NHS. That was another point advocated 18 months ago.

I also support the point made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon)—I had intended to make it myself—that there is a need for other Ministers to reply to such debates. I yield to no one—at least to no one in the Opposition—in my regard for the abilities of the Financial Secretary, but it is asking too much of him to reply to the debate with the expertise, knowledge and experience of Ministers from Departments whose activities are the subject of PAC reports. It would benefit the House, the Government and the governing of the country if departmental Ministers could take part in such debates, as happened during the debate on premature retirement in the NHS and as happened, unusually, during proceedings on the Finance Bill.

This year, the Finance Bill Standing Committee debated vehicle excise duty, and the Government brought to that Committee the Under-Secretary of State for Transport. I make no comment about the views that were expressed or the policy that was enunciated by the Minister. The point is that we had the opportunity to debate with the Minister the taxation aspects of his Department's activities. That was right and proper, and it led to me and my hon. Friends thinking seriously about that aspect of that tax. On behalf of the Opposition, I press the Financial Secretary to consider seriously my request for more such departmental debates on the Floor of the House.

When he replies, I hope that the Financial Secretary will tell us what has happened with regard to the points put to him 18 months ago. After all, he has had plenty of time to think about them. I especially wish to ask him about a point made by the hon. Member for Scarborough, who drew attention to the need for much greater emphasis to be placed on the work of internal audit departments. It is not enough to leave such matters to the PAC. Hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that all Governments should pay more attention to the work of internal audit departments. Much more could be done internally. Indeed, one role of the Comptroller and Auditor General should be to ask why the internal audit departments have not reported on some of the matters which are the subject of PAC reports.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne noted that the PAC is concerned not with Government policy but with the implications and the financial aspects of their decisions. He referred especially to vehicle excise duty. Our debate on the Finance Act 1985 showed that the Government have given little, if any, thought to the relationship between different classes of vehicles in regard to vehicle excise duty. However, the report sets out the measures that should be taken to combat

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the evasion of vehicle excise duty. During our debates in Standing Committee—I make no apology for referring to them, because we had an extensive debate on the subject—the Minister of State estimated that the revenue from vehicle excise duty is about £2·5 billion a year. The Under-Secretary of State for Transport told us that, based on a study conducted a year ago, the Government consider that the rate of evasion is 4 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) declared his interest. The driver and vehicle licensing centre is in his constituency. The hon. Member for Truro declared a slightly different interest. He said that his constituents have an interest in the present structure of taxation because, if the tax on petrol was increased to replace vehicle excise duty, there would be a redistribution of tax from urban to rural areas. That is a valid point. I accept the logic of what he said—that people living in rural areas tend to drive longer distances than people who live in urban areas.

There would be another aspect of redistribution. I am not arguing for that policy; I am drawing attention to another aspect of redistribution which would arise if the tax on petrol increased and the vehicle excise duty were reduced—a redistribution between different classes in our society. There would be a redistribution of tax from smaller to bigger cars. Many people think that that would be desirable. It would also redistribute tax from people who cover small mileages to those who cover high mileages, not because of the areas where they live, but because of their lifestyle.

I note with interest that the Liberal party is opposed to an increase in the tax on petrol. I shall record that for the future because, as the Financial Secretary will remember, when the Opposition pressed him on that point during our debates on the Finance Bill in Committee of the House, not one Liberal Member voted against the increase.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East referred to last December's report about evasion. I think he made a slip of the tongue because he said that the report showed that there had been a reduction in evasion, and that the problem was contained or even resolved. That is to misread the report. The estimates have been reduced, not the amount of evasion. The surveys carried out in June 1984 show that the previous estimates may have been wrong. I say "may have been wrong", because the figure may still be an underestimate. The estimate was based on the number of vehicles observed in three days in the summer of 1984. However, the report notes that some vehicle owners evade duty for at least part of the year. The estimates, therefore, must take account of that. The report also notes that at least twice the number of unlicensed vehicles may be in use than were estimated on the basis of the survey. The scale of the evasion, therefore, may be much nearer the 10 per cent. mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne than the 4 per cent. which is tentatively suggested in the December report.

If the figure is only 4 per cent., the loss to the Inland Revenue is about £100 million a year. The figure will be slightly higher than that because in the interim the Government have increased the rate of vehicle excise duty. That does not take into account the effect of an increase in the vehicle excise duty on the amount of evasion. I am not suggesting that we should study the subject ad infinitum, but if there is a relationship between the level of tax and the amount of evasion, the evasion will have increased because of the increase in tax in excess of the rate of inflation. We can, therefore, expect the amount to be significant. I was glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne hinted that the PAC would go further into the subject. If evasion is about 10 per cent., lost revenue is about £250 million.

The point is not simply to quantify the amount of lost revenue, but to ask what is to be done about it. The hon. Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and for Uxbridge and my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East argued that greater efforts should be made to counter evasion. I was particularly struck by the point made by the hon. Member for Uxbridge that we should consider what other countries do to ensure less evasion. I am sure that other hon. Members from the west midlands will support his point, that a change in the system of vehicle registration and licensing may reduce evasion and have a beneficial effect on British motor manufacturers.

I wish to ask the Financial Secretary some questions about the reports. Why does the Department of Transport not deal with all offence reports? It must be borne in mind that the statistics deal only with known offences and vehicles which have already been spotted as being on the road without vehicle excise duty having been paid. Why has the Department set itself a target of only 60 per cent. of reported offences in London and 80 per cent. elsewhere? Why is it satisfied with those proportions? Why is there a difference between London and elsewhere? Why should 40 per cent. of offenders in London escape action and only 20 per cent. elsewhere? Will the Financial Secretary and the Department of Transport consider employing more people, as recommended by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East, to deal with evasion? The report shows that it would be productive and the revenue to be derived from it would greatly exceed the cost of employing 400 or 500 more people. Therefore, the Financial Secretary should consider the idea.

The hon. Member for Northfield also referred to police reluctance to deal with evasion. He referred specifically to Handsworth and the inner cities, but the problem is not restricted to those areas. I am sure that hon. Members will have seen, as I have, vehicles for which the vehicle excise duty has not been paid. I have never forgotten walking around a car park outside a sports centre in leafy Berkshire and being amazed at the number of cars there that morning for which vehicle excise duty had not been paid for long periods. It was not just that the owner had forgotten to license the car for a month; it was for long periods. The problem is not, therefore, restricted to the inner cities.

Will the Financial Secretary tell the House what has happened in the 18 months since the report was published? He told us that the average penalty had increased to £44, but the present maximum penalty is £500, not £425, because it is five times the rate of vehicle excise duty. The Government's increase in vehicle excise duty has increased the maximum penalty. If the average penalty is only £44, it is low. Does the Financial Secretary find £44 an acceptable figure? Does he want it increased? If so, what are the Government doing to persuade magistrates to view the offence with greater severity? As my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East asked, what reply has been received from the Magistrates' Association? It is more

than a year since the Government wrote to it, and the public and the House are entitled to know what is happening and what magistrates intend to do about it.

The report on the sale of Government shareholdings in publicly owned companies deals with the procedure for selling the holdings, which is a matter of intense political debate. I note from the report that in the sale of Associated British Ports Holdings the public lost £5 million because the value of the shares immediately rose by 23 per cent. The price has now quadrupled. What will happen when all the assets are sold off? That question concerns not the PAC, but the Treasury Select Committee, and it causes my hon. Friends and me some anxiety. I am sure that we shall return to that question in our debates during the year.

Although several hon. Members have constituency interests in vehicle excise duty, the hon. Member for Horsham could not be accused of speaking from a constituency point of view when he referred to regional industrial incentives. He argued that we needed a package of measures, not simply grants. I agree with his general point, especially his idea of a more discriminatory policy, possibly tailored according to region and city. However, I would probably disagree with him about what those measures should be. I also disagree with him about his interpretation of the unemployment figures for the different regions. He read out percentages, and argued that there was little to show for regional industrial incentives over the years. That argument can be met by referring to the work of the PAC. When discussing the effect of regional industrial incentives, one can ask what the figures would have been without those incentives.

The argument is similar to the argument in favour of a Public Accounts Committee. Several hon. Members have said that there is little corruption and fraud in public administration. Our record is better than that of many other countries, but that does not mean that we should not have a PAC whose prime responsibility is to ensure that money is properly spent and not misappropriated. The Committee's role ensures a high standard of public administration. We would not abolish the PAC simply because there was little evidence of fraud and corruption in public life. The Committee has a deterrent effect. Similar arguments apply to regional industrial incentives. Without them, we would probably have lost more jobs in the regions.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) say that each new job was estimated to cost £32,000. He said that that was a large amount, and I agree. However, that was only one estimate. He will have noted in the report that the estimates for the number of jobs created varied a great deal. Over a 21-year period, from 1960 to 1981, estimates varied from 350,000 to 630,000 additional jobs. That is a great variation, and there are many estimates. I suspect that the academics who have been studying regional industrial incentives, rather like the economists, never agree.

It is unfortunate that there is only one estimate for the cost per job. If all the academics had produced estimates, we would, no doubt, have had a wide variation. I am not impressed with the figures because no one knows the true effect of the incentives. As the hon. Member for Lancashire, West said, jobs can be double counted—for example, through transfers of jobs. A new job may be created and counted, but then move because of a grant in another area and be counted again.

The Government's new scheme has the clear objective that the incentives are to reduce regional disparities in unemployment. There is a weakness in that target. It would be easy to reduce regional disparities by having 100 per cent. unemployment in every region. They would all be equal then because there would be a levelling down. I suspect that that would be regarded as a success in some quarters. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) was on the right lines when he spoke with great feeling, based on his constituency experience, of the need for greater efforts to reduce the imbalance in job opportunities. I link that with the comment of the Comptroller and Auditor General about the absence of targets for the Government's regional policy.

There is some discussion in the report about whether the job figures should be gross or net. The real target should be total employment in the regions, and job opportunities should include existing jobs. The targets should take account of jobs saved and indirect jobs created by incentives. The figures should be shown not by an estimate using a standard multiplier effect, but by recording, planning and targeting total employment in a region or city.

The report on stores control in the Ministry of Defence was highlighted by the hon. Members for Scarborough, for Truro and for Uxbridge. I have an interest to declare. Indeed, I always seem to have an interest to declare in our debates on the PAC reports. Perhaps it is because there are so many of them with which to deal at one sitting. I spent some years working in the supply area of the engineering industry. Not only was I responsible for obtaining supplies, but I became a supplier to the Ministry of Defence. Therefore, I have rather more sympathy than other hon. Members with the people handling that responsibility in the Ministry of Defence. I am not as impressed as some hon. Members by the fact that the Ministry of Defence did not regard it as necessary to replace everything that had been burnt at Donnington. I suspect that, in some cases, it could not replace everything. That was the purpose of the all-time buy in the first place—if it did not put those items into store, it could not obtain them again.

The original decision to buy may not have been wrong; perhaps subsequent events led to overstocking. We can be too trenchant in our criticisms with the benefit of hindsight. However, I accept that substantial savings could be made in that aspect of the activities of the Ministry of Defence. I agree with the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Nellist) on 30 April, who, when examining one of the witnesses, referred to the complacency of the permanent under-secretary. The replies recorded in the minutes show a degree of complacency about the efficiency of stores control.

I was disturbed to learn from the hon. Member for Scarborough that Mr. Levene's report was so confidential that it was not shown to the PAC. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about that. I did not gain the impression from the report that that had happened. The information may be buried somewhere in the back-up papers.

Sir Michael Shaw: I am not sure whether the relevant letter is among the mass of papers, but it was dated 13 March.

Mr. Davis: I shall again look through this pile of papers for that crucial letter. It is of great concern that the PAC could not see a report produced for the Minister.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said, reviews are under way. There are two reviews and the Treasury has agreed that the results will be notified to Parliament. I hope that we will have not only the results but the whole report, so that we can judge the efficiency or otherwise of stores control.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton spoke at length about the reports on the housing benefit scheme and social security. He expressed the Opposition's view perfectly. Constituency cases show that the introduction of the housing benefit scheme was chaotic. However, it is easy to forget that there were problems previously and that people lost benefit because they were not clearly advised whether to apply for a rebate or for supplementary benefit. Nevertheless, the introduction of the new scheme caused very many problems. Indeed, it could be argued that it caused more problems than it solved.

It is clear from the report that the scheme did not lead to fewer staff being employed, yet I thought that that was the cardinal objective of the Government. They are actually employing more staff to handle these benefits than hitherto. Therefore, on that narrow measure, the scheme has been a failure.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne summed it up when he said that, having thoroughly investigated the matter as Chairman of the Committee, he concluded that the housing benefit scheme was not properly prepared and not properly introduced. We shall return to that subject during the next year when we debate the social security review.

We will also pick up the points made by the hon. Member for Uxbridge about the report on the arrangements for delivery of social security benefits. The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the cost of paying pensions and other benefits by order books cashed weekly at post offices. He drew attention to the higher cost of that system compared with the cost of payment into a bank account. If someone wishes to have a pension or other benefit paid into a bank account, he should be able to do so.

My hon. Friends and I would oppose any compulsion or financial penalty being imposed on people who want to receive their benefits weekly in the traditional manner across the post office counter. If the Government were to pursue the suggestion of the hon. Member for Uxbridge of a £10 incentive or bonus payment to people who agree to switch to monthly payments through a bank account, we should face the problem of people wishing to change back because of their circumstances changing.

Indeed, that difficulty has already occurred with the monthly payment of child benefit. Hon. Members on both sides will have had that difficulty drawn to their attention by constituents. The overwhelming point is that people should have the right to choose how they are paid benefit, and on that I hope we can achieve cross-party agreement.

Mr. Shersby: I, too, would oppose any penalty being imposed on people who did not wish to make the change, and I agree that people should have the freedom to choose. I was simply suggesting that further publicity should be given to the advantages of switching by those people who felt able, in the national interest, to make the switch.

Mr. Davis: I agreed with the hon. Gentleman when he said that he wished there were more advertisements on television about that than about some other things that are advertised. I, too, wish to encourage people to change, because to do so is in the interest of the taxpayer and, therefore, of us all, because, as the hon. Gentleman said, resources are released for use in other ways. However, I wish to make it clear that my hon. Friends and I would oppose the imposition of any penalty on people—who, in practice, would be the poorer people in society—who could not afford to switch to monthly payments.

The report on the monitoring and control of the nationalised industries is one of the more important documents to come from the Public Accounts Committee this year. I will not express detailed views about that tonight because I suspect that we shall debate it at length after the Queen's Speech. After all, there has been much-trailed legislation about arrangements for the nationalised industries, and we look forward to those debates.

I reiterate what I said at the outset about the need for more frequent debates with various Ministers taking part. The hon. Member for Northampton, South referred to several reports concerning various aspects of the National Health Service. The detailed points that he made deserve a reply from the Minister for Health. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the efficiency of supplies in the NHS — a matter which has been the subject of previous PAC reports. I recall the Committee discussing it five years ago, and it is regretted by hon. Members in all parts of the House that there should still be that apparent waste of resources. As I said, the subject should be discussed with the Minister for Health present rather than our simply having the Financial Secretary dealing with it.

The hon. Member for Northampton, South also referred to the report on dental services in the NHS. Indeed, he was the only hon. Member to refer to that document. That report from the PAC showed that there might be some abuse of the present system of payments by a minority —a small minority, no doubt—of dentists by way of dishonest claims for treatment that has not been given or justified claims for treatment that need not have been given. As the report points out, we need to change the emphasis of the dental service from treatment to prevention. Two other important points should be made in the same context—the effect of the increased charges on the number of people seeking treatment, and the need to improve the dental health of people with low incomes.

The PAC has pointed to the great disparity in dental health between the people of Scotland and the rest of Britain. That is not a new point. It was made in the Black report a few years ago. There is a tremendous disparity between the health of people in social classes one to three and classes four and five. We should debate those issues in a broader context with the Minister for Health present.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) referred to another report which was not listed for special attention in this debate, the report on the control of dockyard operations and manpower—or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West put it, the commercialisation of operations in the dockyards.

The PAC criticised the calculation of the savings. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West went further because he was able to bring to the House his experience on the Select Committee on Defence. My hon. Friend's speech was particularly interesting because he

could put both reports together. We need a combination approach. We need reports from departmental committees on aspects of policy decisions together with reports from the PAC on the financial aspects.

Both reports in this case looked at the same Government decision but from different angles. We need to debate that in a special way. I am not suggesting that the Financial Secretary should not take part in such debates. If I were, I should be excluding myself from them. I am delighted to have him take part in them, but he should have alongside him, also taking part, the Minister with departmental responsibility, in the same way as this year we debated vehicle excise duty as part of our consideration of the Finance Bill. I hope that in future years, not only in debating the Finance Bill but in discussing PAC reports, the same attitude will be taken. After all, hon. Members on both sides are united in agreeing that we need more frequent debates on these reports.

8.34 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): I start by unreservedly paying tribute to the valuable work done by this senior Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, and by that I mean all past, practising and potential members of it. I join those hon. Members who have paid special compliments to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). There is no doubt among all of us who have to digest and participate not only in this debate but in all the work of the Committee about the outstanding work that he does for and on behalf of the House, which means the Government and the country as well, as Chairman of the Committee.

I also add to the compliments to the National Audit Office, which provides much expert and well-informed advice. Its work is close to the interests of the Treasury and —as the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, as a former Financial Secretary, will know — it provides value for money. It is especially valuable in that the Committee's work is independent, objective and external to the the normal Treasury-spending Department relationship. That is an important point.

I also welcome the new form for this debate, which enables the Committee to concentrate our minds on a realistic section of its reports. In particular, I note the two points made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) — if he does not stop being complimentary about me, he will create even more difficulties for me—about the delay between debates. For those of us who have to digest 51 reports it is not easy to have the debates in quick succession, but I shall draw this matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the other relevant people who decide on our debates. I shall also draw their attention to the point made by the hon. Members for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) and for Hodge Hill about Ministers. I know that changing anything in our constitutional system creates a huge debate, but I cannot pretend not to be personally interested, because of the particular difficulties of trying to respond on a wide range of subjects.

Unfortunately, despite the new system that we are introducing today, I was not relieved of the need to remind myself of what is in all the reports to which I have presented replies. I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) about the paper mountain that the PAC faces under the diligent leadership of its Chairman. However, I accept that responsibility, in the interests of preserving hon. Members' undoubted right to raise matters on any report on the agenda. I shall do my best to respond to most of the points that have been made.

For the most part, we are dealing not with recriminations about the past, but with trying to do things better in the future. It is hardly to be expected that any organisation, with the auditor's invaluable hindsight— like the hon. Member for Hodge Hill I speak as an ex-auditor—will have performed perfectly in every respect, although the Comptroller and Auditor General's latest report on the Her Majesty's Stationery Office trading fund comes about as close as it is possible to that. It will usually be possible to point to mistakes and to learn from experience. The PAC's comments and conclusions contribute to that and even where, rarely, the Government do not entirely agree with the conclusions, I assure the House that PAC reports are always read, marked, learnt and inwardly digested by Departments for the future conduct of their business, and are certainly appreciated enormously by the Treasury.

If I am not able to respond to any of the detailed points that have been made, I shall make sure that the relevant Department responds specifically to hon. Members.

The debate on the 13th report on vehicle excise duty seems to have taken much of the attention of the House. My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and the hon. Members for Truro, for Hodge Hill and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson)—who has a particular constituency interest— legitimately spent a considerable time on this extremely difficult subject. I shall make one or two brief observations and then respond specifically to the staffing point that was raised not only by the hon. Member for Swansea, East but by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill in his winding-up speech.

Possible alternative forms of taxation have been examined, but none has been found to be preferable to the form that we have, even with its acknowledged disadvantage. I put that clearly on record. As an example, one would have to add 38p a gallon to the price of petrol if we changed to that method instead of keeping the vehicle excise duty. Efforts to improve enforcement have therefore been made, and considerable success has been achieved. A useful reform of Scottish law, recommended by the Public Accounts Committee, is included in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, which is expected to receive Royal Assent later this month. This will have an impact in this area, and hon. Members will be happy to welcome it.

Mr. Anderson: The key point, however, is that no Government survey of the possible replacement of vehicle excise duty is taking place. To that extent, anxieties cannot be allayed.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer must constantly review and consider every form of tax. I said quite specifically everything that I could possibly say about this matter, and I hope that it was helpful. However, the Scottish aspect is important. The Government have drawn the Committee's views about the level of fines to the attention of the Magistrates Association and, in Scotland, to the attention of the

[Mr. Moore]

District Courts Assocation, the Sheriffs Assocation and the Association of Sheriff Principals and they hope that adequate notice will be taken of those views. The potential penalty is more than adequate. The problem is the average level of the fines applies by the courts. There is a degree of legitimate separation of powers within the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East referred to staffing. In evidence to the PAC, in February 1984, a permanent secretary at the Department of Transport said that an extra 400 to 500 staff might produce the maximum net revenue from enforcement. Improved enforcement performance has caused this figure to be revised downwards to 300 at present, 908 Department of Transport staff are allocated to vehicle excise duty enforcement work, while 25 extra staff are to be deployed to deal with the extra cases in Scotland because of the expected change in Scottish law. Thus, reliance is being placed largely upon improvements in efficiency within the existing staff numbers to reduce evasion, because of the need to order priorities within the Department and because of the constraints upon public service running costs.

Mr. Anderson: Surely a case could be made that because of the downward revision 300 extra staff would be the most cost-effective way of bringing in these receipts. The Minister must look seriously at this point and not reject it out of hand.

Mr. Moore: This matter is being seriously considered. It relates to the Government's overall attitude towards running costs, targets and public expenditure constraints on staff. However, I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point about cost-effectiveness to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

The next report, covered by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, and touched upon by my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield, is the 17th report of the Public Accounts Committee, relating to the sale of Government shareholdings. I shall limit my remarks to the report and not refer to privatisation. The Treasury minute was quite clear on this subject. All I would add is that it is impossible to make a set of rules for the sale of shares. In each case the situation is different. The PAC acknowledges that it is easy to form a view on a case with the benefit of hindsight. All that is available in the decisions about price, method of sale and underwriting are human judgment and experience. The Treasury keeps in close touch with the City on all aspects of the sale of shares so that the best possible outcome of each sale can be attained. As promised, the concerns of the Committee are borne constantly in mind in making difficult decisions. No Department is interested in underpricing the sale of its shares.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, his hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and for Hodge Hill, and my hon. Friends the Members for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) referred at length to the 21st report of the PAC, on regional industrial incentives. My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham has made a particular study of this topic, and I shall consider with care his important contribution to our debate.

I wish to deal with the points raised in the debate and in the report. The Government's policy change was the product of an exhaustive review. The difficulty of measuring the results of what is being done is enormous. This was touched on by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. Much as we should like to be able to devise a simple yardstick, no one has managed to do so. It is easy enough to measure net increases and decreases in employment in assisted areas. What is also required is a measure of what would have happened without the incentives. That must inevitably involve speculation. The research that is being undertaken is aimed at getting better information. I confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham that the object of the change in policy was to target the incentives more closely on job creation, thus making the operation less expensive and critically more cost-effective.

Many hon. Members spoke on the 33rd report, on economy of stores support in the Ministry of Defence. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough, the hon. Member for Truro, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge, the hon. Member for Normanton and the hon. Member for Hodge Hill all addressed themselves to that issue. Because of the experience of the hon. Member for Hodge Hill, I was pleased at his remarks about the complications specifically in relation to Donnington.

The PAC reports on stores and stockholding practices in the MOD have been carefully considered, as has been the earlier independent report on stockholding by Mr. Levene. A comprehensive programme of work is in hand in the MOD, covering economies in stores and stockholding arrangements. Many suggestions in the PAC report were already being examined or implemented—for instance, the improvement of financial control by means of executive responsibility budgets and the use of computerised techniques to allow increased visibility of stocks. Where the suggestions made were not already under review, studies have been undertaken to recommend improvements where necessary. Some studies are complete. Others will report within the next 12 months. I have read all the reports, including the evidence, with care. I have also listened with great care to the debate. I hope my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge will not think that the Treasury, like any other Department, can afford to be complacent. I shall take note of the obvious concern that has been expressed by the Committee.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: I am pleased to hear the Financial Secretary say something about visibility. He has taken note of the point that, whereas the RAF knows what stores it has in local bases, the Army has no knowledge at all, with the Royal Navy coming in between. Will what the Financial Secretary has said mean that there will be an assessment of the stores held by the Army at its local depots?

Mr. Moore: Perhaps I may elaborate on that. It is a little more complex. As he chaired the Committee, the right hon. Gentleman will know that progress has been made in obtaining greater visibility of stocks. The Navy department now has 96 per cent. visibility of stocks at its main depots. This will increase to 98 per cent. by the end of the year. A decision has been taken to link Gibraltar to the computerised inventory supply procedure during 1986-87. Proposals are under consideration for including Royal Fleet Auxiliary stocks.

There is no plan in the short term to make visible the stocks held on HM ships and at Fleet shore establishments

for operational tasks, as they would not be available for reallocation. Their values are estimated at £250 million to £300 million and £25 million to £50 million respectively. However, they will be included in the Royal Navy's onboard ADP system in ships—OASIS. It is envisaged that links between OASIS and CRISP will make the holdings visible to stock managers.

The Army department's stock visibility is being progressed as new ADP systems are introduced and existing systems are enhanced. It is planned to have visibility of BAOR theatre stocks by 1987, with visibility down to divisional level by 1990. Obviously I shall consider the point made by the right hon. Gentleman. I thought that the additional points would be helpful to the Ministry of Defence if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the matter further.

The sixth report on the housing benefit scheme was referred to by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, the hon. Member for Normanton, the hon. Member for Truro and the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. I must refer here to the Treasury minute, which said that the conclusions of the Department's review would have to be considered as part of the wider social security review. The DHSS responses to individual criticisms pointed out the practical and legal difficulties of meeting all the Committees's concerns.

All of us have considerable constituency experience of the problems that have been addressed tonight. The report of the review team which was chaired by Jeremy Rowe has been published, as has the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security". The proposals on housing benefit, as the hon. Member for Hodge Hill fairly said, aim at simplification, but that is not easy because the benefit goes to about one in three households. The appeals system should be given a longer trial.

Less dependence on direct financial support from the Government, specifically for housing benefit costs, thus increasing local accountability and improved monitoring, continue to be favoured in the Green Paper as the keys to greater efficiency. New guidance on handling overpayments has been given to local authorities, but improvement in cross checking must await the outcome of the Green Paper proposals. The Green Paper is clearly involved here, and I shall draw to the attention of the Secretary of State for Social Services the points raised in the debate.

The ninth report deals with the monitoring and control of nationalised industries, and many hon. Members are interested in that. I am delighted to say that the Government welcome the PAC endorsement of the overall monitoring and control structure which derived originally from the 1978 White Paper, and which has been developed since.

There was a similar endorsement recently in the 18th report in relation to the water industry. I also welcome the PAC's recognition that there has been an improvement in the application of these arrangements. Monitoring arrangements have been strengthened considerably in recent years and the Treasury has an interest in the PAC's concern to promote those matters.

I do not usually take issue with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, but I have to take issue with him slightly on those of his arguments which, I am sure, as the hon. Member for Hodge Hill said, we shall be addressing at another stage. I assume that there is a possibility of a debate, but it is not up to me. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said that divergence existed between EFL and other targets. I shall quote specifically from the Treasury minute, which was carefully drawn on this. Paragraph 11 of the Treasury minute says:

"The Treasury and the three departments do not believe that a divergence of view exists over the position of the EFL in the control framework. As a general presumption, investment allocations, EFLs and financial targets should all be compatible and the question of precedence of one over the other does not arise. At the time of setting it would be expected that EFLs would be consistent with the financial targets. Although short-term trading fluctuations might affect an industry's EFL performance in a particular year, over the medium-term period covered by a financial target such fluctuations should generally even out. This is consistent with the central position in the control framework ascribed to financial targets in the 1978 White Paper. EFLs and financial targets are, therefore, to be regarded as two elements of the control system, applying to different time periods and, to some extent, measuring different financial flows. It follows that the purpose of medium-term planning is unaffected."

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne quite legitimately adverted to an important point on the role of the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to nationalised industries and the desire to follow public money wherever it goes. Let me reiterate the Government's position. It was made quite clear in the context of the proceedings on what is now the National Audit Act, and it has not changed. The Committee's motives are quite understandable, but there is another dimension — the effect that there might be on management.

The Government believe that with such exposure to parliamentary criticism of the conduct, as distinct from the results, of the nationalised industries, it would be impossible to expect the industries to conduct themselves on strictly commercial lines. The Government's preferred alternative to C and AG/PAC investigation is the regular programme of MMC investigations, with which the industries co-operate. I am sure we shall discuss this issue again.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Before the Minister leaves that point, I must point out that there have been some changes in the attitude of the nationalised industries. I have had discussions with them, and the hon. Gentleman may have had discussions with some of the nationalised industries. They feel that some of their fears were over-emphasised. A greater understanding of the work of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee is bringing about a number of changes. The Minister has seen changes even in the Treasury. A number of his colleagues are looking at this in a slightly different way, and perhaps the Minister is a little pessimistic. I am sorry to hear that.

Mr. Moore: I said with great care that I was sure we would come back to this issue, and the point the right hon. Gentleman has just made confirms my view of that. I shall look carefully at the point that he has made.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, the hon. Member for Hodge Hill and my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) mentioned the 17th report of the current Session on the general dental service and noted the welcome fact that dental health in Britain has continued to improve and should improve further. I understand that new information, to be published shortly, will confirm that fact.

The report's eight findings and recommendations were directed mainly at existing policies and the rectification of some relatively small, but not unimportant, problems. It will be clear from the Treasury minute that the health

[Mr. Moore]

Departments have already begun to tackle the problems vigorously. More staff are to be appointed to the dental reference service and work has already begun on calculating the annual costs of unsatisfactory treatment and on remedying the problems relating to the remuneration system of dental practitioners. The hon. Member for Hodge Hill mentioned unnecessary treatment, and urgent consideration will be given to the recommendations of the committee of inquiry as soon as its report is received.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South mentioned the second report of the 1984-85 Session on the control of diplomatic service manpower, and my hon. Friend touched on the 15th report of this Session on management of the overseas estate. I thank him for his compliment about the ways in which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has diligently followed up the work of the PAC. I shall have to consider what he said about the area where the Treasury could relax a little.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South, in his usual diligent way, asked many questions about the Health Service. He dipped into many reports dealing with the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, parallel imports, review contracts and the procurement pattern, which is dealt with in the 28th report of the 1983-84 Session. I shall certainly look again at those matters from the Treasury point of view and press the DHSS.

My hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne reminded us again of our debate on the 12th report, on premature retirement, which was discussed under the new Estimates procedure. My hon. Friend also reminded us again of the 16th report, on manpower control, though I have to point out that my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) did not, for once, raise that matter. I shall give careful consideration to all the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South asked us to consider aspects of the 21st report of the current Session, on ECGD. I can bring the House up to date on the figures. Trading results for 1984-85 were better, with a loss of £9·2 million, compared with a £148 million loss in 1983-84, but the cash position was worse, as earlier losses required more cash provision. Borrowings from the Consolidated Fund on 31 March this year were £392·5 million, compared with £42·3 million a year earlier. On 31 July this year borrowings had reached £520 million and were still rising, but it is expected that the underlying trading performance will go on improving. I note particularly the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough, I should say that it is clear that the operation of the ECGD is financed by cash from the Consolidated Fund. Its commercial amounts are completely compatible with the Consolidated Fund amounts. My hon. Friend asked whether the objectives remained the same, and the answer is yes. I refer him to the Treasury minute. It is not necessary for us to match competitors exactly, but I know that my hon. Friend will be reassured about the objectives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough also mentioned what is known as the Levene report. All I can say is that there is no reason to suppose that any similar reports in future will not be released. I know that my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Hodge Hill will be pleased to hear that.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned the 24th report of the 1984-85 Session and I understand the interconnection of the report with that of the Select Committee on Defence. I hope it is understandable that, as we had 51 PAC reports to consider, I have not yet looked at the report of the Select Committee on Defence.

On this very complex matter the Treasury minute seeks to point out that the costings must inevitably be speculative at this stage, but are the best possible. Re-examination of them has confirmed the expectation of worthwhile savings. They will be updated in due course when tenders are received. In the minute, reference was made to the Secretary of State's announcement on 23 July of the decision to go for the commercial management option. The interim measures are thought to be realistic in terms of what can be expected in the run-up to a major structural change.

The MOD regards the dockyards efficiency scheme as having been worthwhile. Its future is now bound up with the interim measures pending contractorisation. Comparisons with commercial refits would not be wasted, as the results would be available to incoming commercial managers. The Comptroller and Auditor General would have the necessary access to the records to fulfil his duties. I shall, however, in the light of the particularly detailed defence questions asked by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, make sure that I ask the Ministry of Defence to respond to these points.

The last report which was touched on in some detail, and to which a response was requested, was referred to by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne in relation to the Forestry Commission. The right hon. Member drew the attention of the House, quite properly, to a rather important aspect of the second report, looking at this particular topic. It is important for me to make sure that the House is aware that the Treasury minute noted the Committee's conclusions and recommendations and was

"pleased to note the provision of information [on land sales] in confidence on request will enable the Committee to satisfy itself on Parliament's behalf".

The Treasury minute confirms that the

"Commission will do its utmost to secure the assent of any purchasers of forestry land to the public disclosure of information about the transaction."

I confirm that the commission's 1984-85 and subsequent annual reports will include information and analyses of sales of land on a regional basis. I am aware that this is not as far as the right hon. Gentleman would wish to go, but I wanted to make sure that the Treasury's comments on that were on the record.

Mr. Robert Sheldon I am grateful to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury for what he has said, but the crucial thing about the disclosure of the price realised after the sale is not that the Public Accounts Committee is made aware of it, because we do not have the knowledge or the understanding of the particular land that is being sold. If there is a general disclosure, however, this is the greatest safeguard against fraud that one can have. As Hamilton

college of education was sold for a song, we are concerned about these matters. This is the only real safeguard that exists. That is why we consider it to be so important.

Mr. Moore: I am aware and supportive of the nature of the right hon. Member's concern, as I obviously responded to the PAC report with a note on the Hamilton college issue. I just wanted to make sure that the House was aware, within the minute, of the other balanced point that the Treasury sought to make.

I do not want to belabour the House with further comments. I shall just repeat what I said at the beginning. No one who has not served on the PAC—and most of us here have done so—has any understanding of the enormity of the work that is done by those who serve the House. They serve both the House and the country admirably.

I can end with no better tribute than that which essentially I uttered on 20 March 1984. I noted tonight that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and the hon. Members for Swansea, East and for Normanton were all concerned about what they regarded as the poor attendance of non-participants in our debate in the House. At the time of the last debate I quoted from *Hansard* in 1976 words which I thought were very important:

"The success of the Committee's work cannot and should not be measured by the attendance of hon. Members in this House when the reports are debated, but by the way in which it changes the future of those who appear before it, and changes the way Government operations are conducted."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1984; Vol. 56, c. 982.]

Those are the words of the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, now the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I can see no better way of ending our debate than with his words, wise then, and still wise today.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 10th to 24th and 26th to 35th Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1983-84, of the 1st to 25th Reports of Session 1984-85 and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance Memoranda on those Reports (Cmnd. 9226, 9325, 9368, 9373, 9452, 9464, 9530, 9546, 9587, 9638, and 9639), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

1983-84

13th Evasion and Enforcement of Vehicle Excise Duty
17th Sale of Government Shareholdings in publicly owned companies
21st Regional Industrial Incentives
33rd MOD: Economy of Stores Support

1984-85

6th Housing Benefits Scheme
9th Monitoring and Control of Nationalised Industries
17th NHS: General Dental Service

Water (Fluoridation) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

FLUORIDATION OF WATER SUPPLIES AT REQUEST OF HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 9, leave out from "area" to end of line 13.

9.3 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment simply seeks to clarify the drafting of clause 1(1). The words that the amendment deletes comprise an amendment moved in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) on behalf of the water industry. I can assure my hon. Friend that it is only the technical feasibility of fluoridation proposals, not the ethical and medical arguments, which will be covered as far as the water industry is concerned.

The amendment was accepted at the time and it was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West (Mr. Patten), then the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, that the extra words were probably not necessary. He accepted the amendment conditionally on the understanding that substantial redrafting would have to be done. After considering the matter, we find that the words are not only unnecessary but that they would render the Bill legally ambiguous even with redrafting. The Bill is intended to remove ambiguity, so it would be sensible to delete the words.

Any statutory water undertaking considering fluoridation is bound to consider whether it is technically feasible and whether it can be done in such a way as to limit the supply of fluoridated water to an area. The further gloss of the additional words is therefore unnecessary.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): There is a certain amount of déjà vu about being back here discussing fluoridation. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister. I congratulate him on assuming his important new position. This is the first time that I have addressed him in the House since then, although I have already written him about 700 letters on health matters.

My right hon. Friend clearly described what has happened about this amendment.

I feel like a man who thought that he needed some spectacles. A committee discussed whether he did and he was told to put them on. He was told that the prescription might need altering but later the spectacles were snatched from him and he was told that he did not need them at all.

My right hon. Friend has made me happy because the water industry is particularly anxious not to be involved in the medical and ethical aspects of the Bill. The industry believes that it has only a technical responsibility. My right hon. Friend's remarks are extremely helpful, especially since Lords amendment No. 6 puts certain responsibilities on health authorities which are not similarly put on water undertakers.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): As I was saying when I was interrupted in March, the Bill is no good. It is not good for young people; it is no good for old people; it is no good for adults; it is no good for society because it

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

removes freedom of choice; it is no good for the Government who are losing their reputation for upholding the liberty of the individual; it is no good for the reputations of my hon. Friends who were enthusiastically against fluoridation and who have now changed their minds; it is no good for Parliament, because it is against the wishes of the people.

I rise in a last effort to improve the Bill—if not to make a bad Bill good, at least to try to make it better.

As was widely suspected last time we discussed the Bill, I did not have a full opportunity to deploy my arguments. I had hardly passed the introduction when it was time to stop. I have been under pressure to lengthen my contributions. I recall the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), then the Minister for Health, who, observing the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), said that he was sure that he did not have a beard at the beginning of my speech. I see that tonight the hon. Gentleman's beard is very long. Perhaps it will be longer before these proceedings are over. I have no wish to delay the House longer than is necessary.

I am told that while I was speaking an American visitor asked what I was talking about and received the answer, "About four and a half hours." When the visitor said, "Yes, but what is he speaking on?"—from one of the attendants, I believe—the answer was, "I do not know. He did not say." That means that I must have been speaking too fast. Indeed, people have said that I should slow down so as to ensure that my arguments get across. It is clear from the way in which the House has filled up for this debate that many people still do not understand the arguments. I can report, however, that since we last met in these pleasant circumstances at a reasonably relaxed hour of the night people all over the country and, indeed, the world have come forward to say that they do not want fluoridation. No doubt in the course of these deliberations we shall be able to refer to various excellent examples.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the survey conducted by the Leicestershire community health council? That survey posed the very neutral question,

"From what you have heard, do you think that fluoride can help reduce tooth decay?"

The answer from 79 per cent. of respondents was "Yes". My hon. and learned Friend and I may not agree with that answer, but it shows the disinterested nature of the report. People were then asked:

"If fluoride can reduce tooth decay, are you in favour of it being available for individual application in toothpaste, school milk, tablet form, etc.?"

To that question, 82·24 per cent. of respondents answered "Yes". The critical question was:

"If fluoride can reduce tooth decay, do you think it should be added to the public water supply?"

Bearing in mind the disinterested nature of the questions so far and the answers suggesting widespread support for fluoride, it is surprising to note that only 26·64 per cent. said "Yes" and a massive 62·72 per cent. said "No", meaning that fluoride should not be added to the water supply.

Mr. Lawrence: I am indeed aware of that survey. The *Lincoln, Rutland, and Stamford Mercury* reported on Friday 30 September 1985:

"The results, according to a press release from the CHC, have dealt 'a body blow' to the pro-fluoride lobby."

It then goes on to quote from the community health council.

In the past, we have not greatly favoured community health councils having a decisive role because they are not democratically elected, but we may now have to revise our views as the Leicestershire community health council is not the only one to take such a position. The Somerset community health council at a meeting on 24 July this year also condemned, by 11 votes to three, the Government's attempt to allow fluoridation of the water supply. That decision was taken after speakers from both sides had been heard. The only occasions on which community health councils vote in favour of fluoridation tend to be those on which the "anti" side is not heard or is ignored.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the "massive" 60-odd per cent. referred to by his hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) represented those who said "No", meaning that fluoride should not be added to the water supply, rather than those who said that they did not know?

Mr. Lawrence: The question was:

"If fluoride can reduce tooth decay, do you think it should be added to the public water supply?"

To that question, 1,489, or 26·64 per cent., answered "Yes", 3,506 or 62·72 per cent. said "No" and 595 or 10·64 per cent. said that they did not know. A total of 5,590 people were surveyed. The community health council said:

"A totally unbiased survey has been conducted and we believe that the figures clearly speak for themselves, and we hope that full account will be taken of them."

There are bound to be some people like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) who are disappointed that their views are not accepted by the general public in Leicestershire. This happens to be a democracy, however, and in a democracy the voice of the few must give way to the wishes of the many on matters such as this. My right hon. and hon. Friends say Amen to that.

9.15 pm

Mr. Davis: As the hon. and learned Gentleman has described the survey as completely unbiased and as he is obviously so widely read in the local newspapers of that part of the country, will he say whether he saw a letter in the *Loughborough Echo* written by a lady who described her experience of being invited to take part in the survey? In her letter, which was published on 14 June, she said:

"I am angry about something that happened while I was waiting . . . with a group of children and feel your readers should be made aware of it. I was approached by a lady who said politely that I looked too busy to be troubled with a questionnaire on fluoride. When I said that it was something I believed in and that I would take the trouble to fill it in she turned to me and said: 'You're never in favour of putting fluoride in our water are you? What if I get cancer?' I was so taken aback that it was a moment before I could say that perhaps if she had such strong views on the subject she should not be doing the survey."

Does the hon. and learned Gentleman still maintain that the survey was unbiased?

Mr. Lawrence: It is quite pitiful that, when there is a survey of 5,590 people, the pro-fluoridation lobby can produce only one person, who was no doubt encouraged to write to the newspaper. It is always possible to find

people who will respond to such pressure. If the hon. Gentleman can find only one person out of 5,590 who were asked their views in an independent and absolutely unbiased survey conducted by the community health council—they frequently support fluoridation—and not the anti-fluoridation lobby, he has revealed the hollowness of the pro-fluoridation lobby.

Mr. Davis *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: If the hon. Gentleman gives me a chance, I shall draw his attention to the public opinion poll that the pro-fluoridation lobby has taken and in which the question was so biased that hundreds of people got the answer wrong.

Mr. Davis: The hon. and learned Gentleman has said that the pro-fluoridation lobby can produce only this one person. Will he allege that Mrs. Alyson Kettle of Langdale avenue, Loughborough, who wrote the letter, was put up to it by the pro-fluoridation lobby or will he withdraw the allegation?

Mr. Lawrence: That is a very silly intervention.

Mr. Davis: You said it.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not know this good lady from Leicestershire or the circumstances in which she wrote. I would not dream of demeaning her. No doubt she is an honest and upright lady, but, as I have not had the opportunity to examine her to establish on what basis the letter was written, I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question.

One example of bias out of 5,590 people surveyed hardly speaks loudly in support of the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lawrence: Before my hon. Friend speaks, may I say that the service that he has done to draw the attention of the people of Leicestershire and the rest of the country to the evils of fluoridation have been stirring almost beyond words. Without my hon. Friend's activities, it is at any rate doubtful whether the community health council in Leicestershire would have conducted this operation. All of us who believe that fluoridation must be resisted because of the harm that it will do to health and because it will interfere with people's freedoms have much to thank my hon. Friend for.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) rises, may I tell him and the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that this is not a general debate on the benefit or otherwise of fluoride. I direct their attention to the amendment, which says:

Page 1, line 9, leave out from "area" to end of line 13.

The hon. Gentleman must direct his argument to the amendment and not to the general principle of whether fluoride should be introduced.

Mr. Lawrence: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. I was sidetracked by hon. Members who asked for specific answers to specific questions which were out of order. I ought to have been less courteous to them and more courteous to the Chair. I hope that you will forgive me. Perhaps in due course at the proper moment my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East will be able to explain the Leicester survey.

I am against Lords amendment No. 1 because it removes a protection that this House put into the Bill. I concede that this House did not provide the best possible protection in the Bill, and I concede that the form in which that limited protection was produced was somewhat inelegant. I also concede that some of its wording at any rate may have been mere surplusage. Nevertheless, by removing that clause the Bill and its scope have been expanded against the interests of the country and in favour of the views of those hon. Members who voted for the Bill on Second Reading and in Committee. The Bill clearly laid down that the fluoride content of water could be increased only if, in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker, it was "reasonably practicable" to do so. That phrase has been removed, and it is that to which I object.

What is reasonable has been interpreted endlessly by the courts, and as I wish to hurry on the proceedings I shall not at this stage go into those various definitions of the word "reasonable". What is practical has, likewise, often been defined by the courts, and again there is no need to waste time on that.

It is not necessary to refer to those two words because the courts have provided definitions for the phrase "reasonably practicable". For example:

"'Reasonably practicable' (Metalliferous Mines Regulation Act 1872 (c. 77), s. 23). What is 'reasonably practicable' depends upon a consideration whether the time, trouble and expense of the precautions which might be taken are disproportionate to the risk involved".

That was the decision of the court in the case of Marshall *v.* Gotham Company reported in *Appeal Cases*, 1954, at page 360.

It was defined again in the case of Braham *v.* Joseph Lyons and Company in 1962 in the following terms:

"'So far as is reasonably practicable' (Factories Act 1937 (c. 67), s. 25(1) as amended, now Factories Act 1961 (c. 34), s. 28(1)) does not mean that a factory floor must be kept free from obstructions and slippery substances at all times but that all reasonable measures must be taken to keep it free."

In Scotland in 1964, in the case of Fern *v.* Dundee Corporation, it was stated:

"If a precaution is practicable it must be taken unless in the whole circumstances, that would be unreasonable".

I might add that "reasonable" in this context has a separate meaning from the word "practicable". It does not always have a separate meaning. In a case in 1950, Naylor Benzon Mining Co., the learned judge said:

"The words 'reasonably necessary', used as a phrase in which the adverb is designed to qualify the adjective, are meaningless. A thing is necessary or it is not necessary. It may be regarded or treated as necessary in one context and not in another, but the context cannot be provided by merely preceding the word 'necessary' with an adverb such as 'reasonably'. As it stands, the phrase, to me, is a contradiction in terms."

That criticism cannot be levelled at the phrase "reasonably practicable". Therefore, if one applies the definitions to the circumstances of fluoridation, what is reasonably practicable is this: that the Bill gives the water undertakers the power to fluoridate. Before the clause was amended by their Lordships, it obliged the water authorities to use their discretion and to take into account what was reasonably practical. That means that they can fluoridate unless it would be unreasonable to do so.

I argue that it would be downright unreasonable for a water authority to fluoridate against the clearly expressed wishes of democratically elected district and county councils. Moreover, if the community health

[Mr. Lawrence]

council in an area expresses its disapproval, not just through a vote of the council but through a public opinion poll—even with all the obvious faults that that has—it would be utterly unreasonable for the water authority to go against the wishes of the people and force them to be mass-medicated.

I might be asked to show the House some practical examples of where fluoridation would take place against the wishes of the people, and would therefore be unreasonable. In answer to that, I give the House the example of Leicestershire and Somerset. I can give the example of the health authority and the water authority in the midlands, which decided to fluoridate. Their decision was directly contrary to views expressed by Staffordshire county council, Shropshire county council, Gloucestershire county council, Herefordshire county council and Worcestershire county council. Some district councils also expressed a view—

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): What did Warwickshire do?

Mr. Lawrence: That council is not on my list. Perhaps it decided against fluoridation later — *[Interruption.]* May I finish the list first? If not, we shall be here all night, and I am trying to avoid that, if possible.

The district councils which objected include Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford, South Staffordshire, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Cannock Chase, Tamworth and Stoke-on-Trent. They have all said "No". Oswestry, North Shropshire, South Shropshire, Shrewsbury and Atcham, The Wrekin and Bridgnorth in Shropshire have all said no. Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Worcester and Hereford have all said no. The district councils of Cheltenham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Stroud and Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire have all said no. Wolverhampton, Stratford-on-Avon, South Derbyshire, Broxtowe and Nottingham councils have all said no. What do the health authority and the water authority say? Yes.

It is utterly unreasonable, it is practically unreasonable, it is unreasonably practical—whatever combination of words one uses, it cannot be reasonable for a water authority to fluoridate water in areas where the overwhelming body of county councils, district councils and community health councils disagree.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I give way to my hon. Friend, who has made a signal contribution to the cause.

Mr. Walker: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that in Scotland the water authority is the regional council——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman address his remarks to the Chair, please?

Mr. Walker: Tayside regional council, which is an elected authority, is the water authority, and it has said, "No" to fluoridation.

9.30 pm

Mr. Lawrence: I am delighted to hear that. I suppose that I did know that, but because of the sheer number of councils that have opposed the measure I had momentarily forgotten.

The list does not end there, because there are the parish councils in the regional health authority, which are covered by the west midlands decision to fluoridate. A total of 148 have been circularised by the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association. Of the 72 replies, 12 were in favour of fluoridation—none conducted a survey—58 were against, of which 22 conducted a local survey, and two did not know. Of those responding, 86 per cent. of the parish councils in Staffordshire are against fluoridation of the water supply, and 14 in favour. Forty per cent. of those against fluoridation bothered to conduct surveys. Yet the health authority has said that fluoridation is a good step. The medical and dental know-alls are telling the people, who want their freedom that their freedom can go and disappear because they know best, and are the do-gooders who will tell the people what they can and cannot have by way of medication. The words "reasonably practical"——

Mr. Bruinvels: Practicable.

Mr. Lawrence: If my hon. Friend tempts me I can show him definitions where practical and practicable mean the same thing, but I do not wish to be tempted, because I want to make progress.

Mr. Best: Before my hon. and learned Friend leaves the point about the councils, is he aware that I recently turned up an interesting piece of information, which shows that, as long ago as 1969, 12 councils voted against fluoridation after receiving a Ministry's circular letter on 20 June? They were Cheshire, Denbighshire, Bolton, Hastings, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, Sunderland, Torbay, Hackney, Havering, Thames and Lewisham. Is he further aware that six other councils voted against fluoridation after the publication in July 1969 of the Ministry's 11-year report? They included Cardiganshire, Darlington, Grimsby, Salford, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, and Esher urban district council. That does not say much for the quality of past evidence from Government Ministries, and says a lot for the way in which local authorities can respond to public opinion. I should be grateful if my hon. and learned Friend could comment.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend's erudition is legendary. Once again he has drawn attention to a long list of those who oppose fluoridation, whom it was not possible for me to mention in my opening remarks.

I would have preferred the Bill to have given real teeth to the rights of the people to express their views about whether they wish to have this corrosive poison thrust down their throats against their wishes, whether or not it improves their teeth, whether or not it gives them cancer or some other disease, and whether or not they like it. I would rather that the Bill had some real teeth for the rights of the people to be represented by local authorities and the community health council, but alas that was not the case.

I am reduced—this is no small matter—to proposing amendments (b) and (c), neither of which you, Mr. Speaker, in your wisdom, have chosen. I should like to refer to them, if that is in order. I should have liked the Bill to include the requirement that the authorities are requested to fluoridate by a resolution of each local authority or community health council, or both, whose area falls wholly or partly within the area affected by the application. The amendments were ruled out of order, so I am reduced to requesting—but it is no small thing—that my colleagues vote against the Lords amendment. The

restriction, limitation and qualificaion were put into the Bill to demand the statutory water authority to do what was reasonably practical—knowing full well how the courts interpret the word "reasonable", and knowing that, by a simple application of common sense, "reasonable" cannot mean going against the wishes of almost every democratically elected or representative group.

That safeguard having been taken out of the Bill by the other place, I ask my hon. Friends to support me in the Lobby to ensure that it is put back into the Bill to protect the people of our country.

Mr. Best: As you have properly told the House, Mr. Speaker, this is not a general debate; it is a debate on a narrow issue—Lords amendment No. 1. But, sadly, this measure does the Conservative party no good. It gave me no pleasure to read a letter in *The Listener* on 26 September which stated:

"Who would dream that Mrs. Thatcher, who says she is inflexible when defending the freedom of choice of the individual, would preside over a Parliament whisking through a scheme that would not disgrace a totalitarian regime? A scheme that is to legalise forcibly feeding every citizen with a dose of medicine for a disease that they may not have, via an unavoidable water supply? Everyone would be screaming in protest if it were suggested that legal powers were being taken to enable a bureaucrat to come to your door each day and force a pill down your throat to treat your teeth. Yet this is precisely what fluoridation of water achieves by a back-door and still illegal method."

I do not adopt those comments, but it saddens me to read them. They are a manifestation of the widespread feeling of antipathy towards the Bill in general — although we are not discussing that tonight. The Lords amendment seeks to delete half of clause 1(1). We are forced to speculate why that subsection was ever included. Was it an act of negligence by the parliamentary draftsmen to put in mere verbiage and persiflage — something wholly unnecessary and meaningless?

Sir John Page: My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) would not want to include mere verbiage and persiflage. The other place has deleted an amendment that I recommended which was accepted on the basis that it would be heavily amended later. Therefore, we are discussing my amendment on the back of the menu, not the act of a parliamentary draftsman.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for clarifying the matter. It exonerates the parliamentary draftsmen, but puts me in some difficulty. Even more do I seem forced to support the original clause, now knowing its provenance. It came from my hon. Friend, who does not lightly table amendments. I ask him whether we should still have that safeguard enshrined in the Bill when it passes into law, which it will undoubtedly do because the payroll vote will ensure that. The safeguard ensures that the statutory water undertaker is able to consider whether the additional fluoride in the amounts prescribed by the Bill is reasonably practical.

I shall not delay the House by quoting in extenso various arguments put forward by statutory water undertakers — save one. It concerns something that I noted in the *Evening Argus*, a newspaper circulating in the Brighton area. It appeared on 15 March under the heading

"Water chiefs fluoride Bill fear".

The article read:

"Putting fluoride in Sussex water supplies would cost millions of pounds and be difficult to regulate, the Southern Water Authority says. Parliament is considering a controversial scheme allowing health authorities to ask for the fluoridation of household supplies in a bid to cut tooth decay in children. MPs gave the Bill a third reading after a mammoth debate, and the proposals will now be discussed in the House of Lords. But the Southern Water Authority is worried about who would pay. Chairman Sir Godfrey Taylor says that if the scheme is passed, either the government or health authorities should foot the cost. Any scheme would cause problems because the fluoridation of water would have to be done to exact specifications as high levels of the chemical could be dangerous. 'We are not in a position to judge whether fluoride should be added or not. We do not have medical staff,' Sir Godfrey said. 'It would cost a considerable amount of money, certainly millions, and we would expect the Government or health authorities to pay.'"

That is the view of one chairman of one statutory water undertaker. I know that that view is shared by a number of other water undertakers.

If the amendment were agreed to, with the deletion of the words as suggested, any ability of the statutory water undertaker to exercise what I regard as a right to consider whether it is practically reasonable to add fluoride to the water supplies would be removed. Effectively, the statutory water undertaker would move off the scene.

It is true that it is not mandatory on water undertakers to fluoridate water supplies on the advice of the health authority if an application is made, for it is still enshrined in the Bill that statutory undertakers

"may, while the application remains in force, increase the fluoride content of the water".

But they are no longer required to consider whether it is reasonably practicable to do so, and that is my first objection to the deletion of those words.

Those words were added — my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West explained the manner in which they were added — specifically to give the statutory water undertaker the opportunity to consider whether it was practically reasonable to add fluoride to the water supplies. That opportunity will now be removed.

Even more insidious is the deletion of the second part of the subsection——

"without at the same time increasing the fluoride content of the water supplied by them to areas outside that covered by the application."

In other words, there would no longer be a requirement if an application, in its execution, ensured that areas outside the area covered by the application received fluoridated water. There is no means to ensure that that will not happen.

This is the addition of fluoride by stealth. It will enable a statutory water undertaker to add fluoride to an area without regard—because the provision will no longer be in the Bill—to whether that fluoride goes into areas outside those covered by the application.

It is important to take account of the views of the people living in those areas. Even with the consultation process in the Bill, which we shall debate at a later stage, the measure does not recognise sufficiently the wishes of the local community, whether expressed by individuals or through directly elected authorities, which neither a health authority nor a statutory water undertaker is.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): As a matter of definition, does not the Lords amendment widen the discretion that is available to the statutory water undertaker, because, in the Bill as drafted before it went to the Lords, was not the discretion bounded by the consideration of "reasonably practicable" whereas with the deletion it can go outside that definition? Is not the iniquity of the amendment that it extends the fluoride content of

[Mr. Richard Hickmet]

the water supplied by statutory water undertakers to areas outside that covered by the application? I agree with the second part of my hon. Friend's proposition, but as to the first part, does not the amendment widen the discretion of water authorities?

9.45 pm

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who would be a worthy opponent in court—a pleasure that I have not yet enjoyed — because he speaks the truth. The amendment widens the discretion. My hon. Friend will know, from his own profound knowledge of the law, that to have no requirement of reasonable practicability, which exists in so many other branches of the law—to which I shall not refer as my hon. and learned Friend for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) did so in some detail—would create a lawyers' paradise, but a nightmare for those who wish to have certainty in the law and some safeguards.

I accept that the words "reasonably practicable" are open to a variety of interpretations and have been the subject of litigation in many areas. However, to remove them altogether would remove the safeguards to which my hon. Friend is referring.

Mr. Lawrence: Is not the position that the removal of the words "reasonably practicable" widens the discretion of the water authorities to fluoridate, and that we are asking for a limitation? The effect of the amendment is to expand the influence of the Bill, the purpose of which is to allow as much fluoridisation as possible. Both my hon. Friends the Members for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) are right, but it is important to be aware of the distinction. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn is against anything that gives more discretion to water authorities to act against the interests of the people, is he not?

Mr. Best: The Bill is unsatisfactory because it does not allow the people who will be forced to drink the water because they cannot live without doing so and therefore consume fluoride against their wishes the ability to say that they do not want to consume fluoride. The Bill is defective ab initio. It will be even more defective if the amendment is passed, for the reason stated by my hon. and learned Friend for Burton, because it widens the scope. When there is no democratic control, as there is not on health authorities or statutory water undertakers, and no meaningful consultation clause inserted in a Bill to take cognisance of the fact so that it can be acted upon, one is forced to ask quis custodiat ipsos custodes? There is no answer to that question in the Bill because there is carte blanche.

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) are concerned to give powers to the statutory water undertakings to prevent the fluoridation of water, but does not the amendment as drafted, inasmuch as it applies to the reasonable practicability test, give a wider discretion to the statutory water undertaking? Let us suppose that the Bill were to be enacted without the Lords amendment. If a local authority or a statutory undertaking were to fluoridate the water on grounds other than reasonable practicability, there could be an application for judicial review, and the decision could be challenged. If the Lords amendment is made, does it not widen the discretion of the statutory water undertaking to do precisely that which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn wish to do, and make it more likely that the fluoridation of water will be prevented? The iniquity is that the amendment pays no regard to wider questions.

Mr. Best: I can encapsulate the views of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton, my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) and my own by saying that in the clause, as drafted, there are three safeguards. First, on a health authority's application the statutory water undertaker is entitled to fluoridate the water supplies. It is not forced to do so. That is inherent in the word "may". The statutory water undertaker may increase the fluoride content of the water. The water undertaker will therefore consider whether or not to fluoridate the water supply.

The second safeguard is that certain criteria are laid down relating to the way in which the statutory water undertaker will reach a decision on whether to fluoridate the water supply. The first of the two criteria provides that in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker it is reasonably practicable to fluoridate the water supply. In the first instance, the water undertaker is given the power to say whether it will fluoridate the water supply. Then it is required to consider whether it is reasonably practicable to do so. The third safeguard is that the water undertaker must have regard to the fact that it must not increase the fluoride content of the water supplied by it to areas outside the area covered by the application.

There are three safeguards, but in reality the last two are inherent in the first. They are the criteria by which the first safeguard shall be judged. The statutory water undertaker is given guidelines by which to reach its decision. If those guidelines are removed, the statutory water undertaker is provided with no criteria and no assistance with which to reach a decision. In effect, the first safeguard is removed. The water undertaker may increase the fluoride content, but if it is not told how to reach its decision it will not be required to exercise that right in any particular way.

Mr. Hickmet: By his analysis, my hon. Friend must concede that he has argued himself into precisely the corner that I was trying to portray. The amendment widens the discretion, otherwise the statutory water undertaker's discretion will be perceived to be dependent upon two tests. If the Bill were to be passed unamended, when arguing about how it has exercised its discretion the statutory water undertaker might be found to have exercised it unreasonably if its discretion were exercised on grounds other than reasonable practicability, or the effect on water supplies outside the area supplied by it. If my hon. Friend wishes to prevent the fluoridation of water, the statutory undertaker has to be armed with a much wider discretion than it has now, otherwise it will find that it has acted ultra vires.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend is right. No doubt he will be conversant with Professor Hart's book on administrative law. He will know the great dangers that exist where any authority is given freedom untrammelled by guidelines. The problem is that one does not know, although one may suspect, that it would be subject to

litigation as to whether a statutory water undertaker would have to act judicially. Would it have to observe the rules of natural justice? Would it have to consider both sides of the argument?

With great respect to those who drafted the Lords amendment, it has not been drafted by a lawyer who wishes to reduce the amount of litigation. If the amendment is passed, it will increase litigation. The matters to which I have referred are not answered. A point which would appeal to hon. Members on both sides of the House, and particularly, I suspect, to Opposition Members, is that there is a grave danger if we pass legislation which effectively delegates authority from the House to non-elected undertakers, such as a statutory water undertaker, but fail to give guidelines whereby they can be properly controlled.

I realise the strength of feeling among Opposition Members who perhaps desire to see greater central Government control than many of my hon. Friends would wish. Many of us on this side of the House wish to see local authorities taking more decisions. If Opposition Members are concerned about a negation of centralised control, about power slipping from the grasp of the House and about giving untrammelled powers to statutory water undertakers or any other authority, they should support the amendment, because it would achieve that. It would give water authorities complete freedom to exercise a decision to fluoridate water supplies without giving any criteria by which that decision might be regulated. That is particularly insidious, damaging and alien to the belief of most of us that a sacred function of Members of Parliament is to ensure that power does not go too far beyond the elected member, nationally or locally.

I have dealt with the question whether the "reasonably practicable" test will disappear. I am even more concerned about the total absence of a requirement that there should not be artificial fluoridation of water supplies outside the area of an application. By removing the second portion of words which would be deleted by the amendment we would achieve that object. I do not think I was being euphemistic or unfair to the Bill by describing it as fluoridation by stealth. That is precisely what would happen. Either there is a need for a health authority to make an application to determine that an area will be fluoridated, or that in itself is a mere chimera, a mere piece of window dressing for massive artificial fluoridation of the whole country.

If we believe that there is significance in clause 1 as drafted—that a health authority be required to make an application for artificial fluoridation of water supplies—that in itself must be precise or it is meaningless. If it is not precise, it becomes meaningless because people outside the area of the application will be affected.

My grave concern is precisely that the deletion of these words achieves that object. No doubt the Benthamites among us will say that that does not matter as long as the majority of people are happy getting fluoride in the water supplies, that if there are one or two objectors that is tough luck. It may be unfortunate that they live in an area outside the area covered by the applications made by the health authority, or it may be that no decision has been taken for their area. Of course, there is no consultation for them, even within the present confines of the Bill. There is no consultation for an area outside the area covered by the substance of the application. One can understand that argument.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the end of this day's sitting, consideration of Lords Amendments to the Water (Fluoridation) Bill, and proceedings on the Housing Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing Associations Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, the Landlord and Tenant Bill *[Lords]* and the Weights and Measures Bill *[Lords]*, may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Water (Fluoridation) Bill

Lords amendments again considered.

Question again proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Best: One can understand the argument that the majority must always have sway, that it is a question of the greatest good done for the greatest number. Perhaps I have not quoted Bentham with complete accuracy. It is one thing to say that in matters which do not affect the health and well-being of individuals, but it is an entirely different matter to say that in respect of an individual who for the sustenance of life must drink from the water supply and has no alternative source. I do not subscribe to this view, and I hope that the House rejects the view that in this respect the greatest good for the greatest number must hold sway.

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that Jeremy Bentham is one of the deader constituents in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)? The hon. Member looks as if he died from fluoride poisoning.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman has made a personal reference and I will not follow him down that route.

Many people claim to be adversely affected by fluoride. Some of those claims are groundless. One also knows that there is conclusive evidence that fluoride can be harmful. It was said somewhat uncharitably about my hon. Friend the Minister then responsible for the passage of this Bill—not by me, I hasten to add—that he had been an opponent of artificial fluoridation for most of his life and I think he said it was his duty to oppose it. He is no longer a member of the Front Bench and is not dealing with this Bill. He answered a parliamentary question of mine which I quoted in the earlier debate. I do not have it to hand, but it demonstrated quite conclusively that in certain concentrations fluoride causes harm to people.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has strayed from the amendment.

Mr. Best: I am properly brought to order. I do not wish to allege that the hon. Gentleman led me astray. It is my own misfeasance if I allowed him to do so.

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. Friend complains about the amendment inasmuch as it deletes the requirement that the water undertaker shall not at the same time increase the fluoride content of water supplied by it to areas outside that covered by the application. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, that is an absolute test, an absolute rule. If the statutory undertaker, even minutely or in a limited way, were to affect the water supplied to areas outside the area covered by the application, the statutory undertaker would be in breach of the Act.

[Mr. Hickmet]

Will my hon. Friend address his mind to how we can enact a Bill to give a right to fluoridate water to the relevant statutory undertaker if we wish to prevent it from being supplied to an area outside that covered by the application when there is an absolute test? In other words, an absolute test would negate the whole purpose of the Bill. An absolute test would make it virtually impossible for a statutory undertaker to fluoridate the water without in some respects affecting water outside the area of the application. How would my hon. Friend like to see the Bill drafted? What is wrong about the way it has been amended? What is wrong with an amendment which gets round the absolute test without which one could not possibly fluoridate the water?

Mr. Best: If the House will forgive me, I shall play the devil's advocate and give what I suspect would be the Government's answer to that question. No doubt they would say that it is impossible to have an absolute test to ensure that any area outside that covered by the application would not receive artificially fluoridated water. We cannot draw boundaries with the necessary distinction and clarity. No doubt the Government would also say that it is common sense to delete the words—though that means that the original clause must have been nonsense—because we cannot ensure that outside areas will not be artificially fluoridated.

I was asked how I would overcome that problem. I would lean in favour of the individual and of the individual's choice. Therefore, I would put the onus on the health authority or authorities and the statutory water undertaker or undertakers to ensure that anybody who was likely to receive artificially fluoridated water was covered by an application. If a health authority made an application and there was a likelihood or a danger of fluoridated water going into an area outside that for which the application was made, the authority should have to ensure that its neighbouring authority, covering the outside area, made an application in respect of that area.

I would shift the onus on to the bodies that sought to fluoridate the water supply. The trouble with the clause is that the onus is on those who do not wish to receive fluoridated water. I find it extraordinary that more hon. Members, especially Opposition Members, do not understand that insidious development.

Mr. Golding: I do not see how the transportation of fluoridated water can be avoided. When some of us go fishing, we fill flasks with tea or coffee which may be made with fluoridated water. We may go to a river 70 or 80 miles away and at the end of the day pour into a stream the tea or coffee that we have not consumed. How could a water authority or a health authority control that massive transportation of fluoridated water?

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman's argument is flawed, not to say transparent. In the circumstances outlined by the hon. Gentleman, control would be impossible, but, in fairness to the Bill, I should make it clear that it says that the statutory water undertaker is obliged to ensure that water supplied by it to areas outside that covered by its application will not be artificially fluoridated. So there is a measure of control there.

I can answer the hon. Gentleman with an example from my own constituency. As well as being the most beautiful constituency in the country, it is also an island and is able to receive water supplies fairly isolated from the mainland. In consequence, it would be very easy to ensure that fluoridated water went only on to the island of Ynys Môn and did not go to Gwynedd. Indeed, there is a new water link from the mainland to Ynys Môn which tops up the water to Anglesey in the event of drought or of reservoirs reaching a low level. The nonsense of that is that that water is not fluoridated and so the amount of the fluoride which is provided to Ynys Môn is unknown because it is dissipated by the addition at certain times of non-fluoridated water.

Mr. Bruinvels: Has my hon. Friend considered the point that in Eire the water is fluoridated already? Are not the hon. Members' constituents already in danger of fluoridated water coming across the Irish sea?

Mr. Best: Much comes across the Irish sea and I will not speculate on whether it is all beneficial or harmful. If my hon. Friend will allow me, I will not follow him down that path.

Mr. Hickmet *rose*——

Mr. Best: I will give way in a moment.

The problem of this amendment is not just what I have already stated. The notes on the Lords amendment—one is always grateful to the Government for producing notes on Lords amendments or on any other matter, and I congratulate them on having done so—on clause 1 say:

"This amendment clarifies the meaning of Clause 1 subclause 1 by deleting the final wording."

"Clarifies"!

The House may well feel enlightened as a result of my words tonight, but I doubt whether I shall have clarified the matter because it is not capable of clarification. Members may feel like the judge who listened to F.E. Smith when he said, "Your Honour may well be none the wiser but he is certainly better informed." I feel that I may well have better informed the House tonight, but it may well be that the House is none the wiser.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): In his attempt to be fair-minded and even-handed, and even in his attempt to put the Government's case for them on this Lords amendment, on which I doubt that they would have dared to put such an argument, I am worried by the horrifying prospect that is being opened up as a result of the Lords amendment. My hon. Friend has talked about the onus on the health authority having regard to a neighbouring health authority, but where is the onus or obligation on the water authority? Take the remote possibility of a request being made for the Ynys Môn water supply to be fluoridated. The onus having been removed as a result of this amendment, what control would there be on the water authority for it not to treat the rest of its area in the same way? We would have the ridiculous situation of the Welsh water authority deciding, if it has a request for Ynys Môn water to be fluoridated, that there is no obligation on it not to fluoridate neighbouring areas. By that interpretation, my constituency of Cardiff, North, 200 miles——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I thought that the hon. Member was making an intervention, but it is now turning into a speech. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that he will be able later to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will amplify his point.

These are the inherent anomalies. This is a very limited debate because it is entirely about the words to be deleted. Unfortunately, there is much more to be said on other amendments, so I shall proceed.

10.15 pm

Hon. Members have done the House a service by pointing out that anomalies will result from reducing safeguards. The Lords amendment removes the safeguards in a poignant and insidious way. If we knew on the best evidence available that the majority of people in the country, or even the majority in certain areas, were in favour of the artificial fluoridation of water supplies, the debate would not be so important. However, the debate is about areas outside those covered by an application and it is important precisely because we know on the best evidence available most people are against the fluoridation of water supplies.

The people might be misinformed. They might be totally misguided. They might be the lackeys of those who use scaremongering tactics to lead people down a path where no rational human being would go. Socialists behave like that every time Conservative Governments are elected and Conservatives do the same whenever Socialist Governments are elected. Misguided or misled, that is their view and it is the substance of democracy.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) who in an intervention quoted a letter. He suggested that people were incapable of expressing their view with clarity. He suggested that every answer to an opinion poll was weighted either by the way in which the question was put or by the way in which the questioner asked the question. That is insulting. People are capable of expressing views.

The hon. Gentleman cannot challenge the Leicestershire community health council survey on the basis of the questions being interested because they are manifestly and patently disinterested. One could not find a question which was more evenly balanced. The hon. Gentleman cannot attack the poll at that level and therefore he is forced to attack it by accusing an unnamed questioner who pushed a lady up against a wall and threatened either physical or mental violence to persuade her to say something which was alien to her. I find that incomprehensible.

Mr. Terry Davis: The hon. Gentleman is putting words into my mouth. He must read carefully what I said. I did not suggest that the interviewer used threats. The hon. Member made a silly statement. I suggested that there was bias in the conduct of the survey. That is based on the letter which I quoted.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) referred to a letter in a newspaper which supported the poll. I was drawing attention to other letters which the hon. and learned Gentleman chose not to read or had not seen. I allege that there is some evidence—I put it no higher—that the poll was not scientifically conducted. Bias can occur in the way in which a sample is drawn as well as in the way in which a question is phrased. Surely the hon. Gentleman is aware of that. He asserts that the majority of people are opposed to fluoridation. Where is his evidence?

Mr. Best: If I followed that argument, I should be out of order. If I have misunderstood the hon. Gentleman, the fault is mine. I am grateful for the clarification because the hon. Gentleman apparently is not attacking the survey on the basis of the questions asked or on the way in which those taking the survey conducted themselves in public.

Mr. Terry Davis: But I am.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman shifts his ground. He says that there might be some evidence, but nothing tangible.

I understood the hon. Gentleman to say that the survey was not conducted scientifically. That may be so—I do not know. It may not have been conducted in the way in which National Opinion Poll and Marplan conduct their surveys, although I suspect that the hon. Gentleman and I would have some misgivings about the scientific nature of those surveys, too. Nevertheless, it remains the best evidence that we have in answer to disinterested questions as to the recent opinion of people in a particular area who have now had the benefit of a very wide-ranging debate about fluoride, both within and outside the House.

If the deletion proposed in the Lords amendment is accepted, we shall be telling people in areas outside those covered by an application that we do not care about their opinion because the Bill provides no way in which that opinion can be assessed. The consultation procedures, such as they are, apply only to areas which are the subject of an application. No reference is made to and no cognisance is taken of areas outside. In other words, we do not care about people who will incidentally receive fluoride in their water because it is impossible to draw the thin dividing line between an area which is the subject of an application and one outside. The opinion of people in areas outside is apparently immaterial. It does not even feature in the consultation process set out in the Bill.

I find that offensive not just because of the inherent denial of the right of individuals to be consulted and to have a say about what they drink. In a free society as we know it, and certainly in a free Conservative society as Members on this side know it, people should be able to choose what they eat and drink so long as it is safe. Indeed, I hope that that proposition does not find any great dissent in any part of the House. I do not pretend that the evidence is the most conclusive, but it is the best available and it shows that a large number of people in many parts of the country are against artificial fluoridation of the water supply. For whatever reason, and however misguided they may be, they are against it. What comfort can the hon. Member for Hodge Hill—I direct these remarks at him in view of his earlier intervention, but I am sure that he will not take them personally—and what comfort can the proponents of the Bill offer, for instance, to the 3,506 people in Leicestershire who, out of a total 5,590, in answer to the disinterested question,

"If fluoride can reduce tooth decay, do you think it should be added to the public water supply?"

replied with an unequivocal no? What comfort can they offer those people if, perchance, those people happen to live in an area adjacent to one which is the subject of an application for artificial fluoridation of the water supply?

Mr. Hickmet: Is not my hon. Friend inviting the House to defeat the Bill altogether if he opposes the amendment because of the effect on water supplies in areas outside those covered by an application? He has agreed

[Mr. Hickmet]

with me and argued persuasively that it is impossible to avoid water being affected outside the area of an application. If he argues that the Lords amendment must be rejected for that reason, he is effectively seeking to prevent the fluoridation of water altogether. Is not that right? My hon. Friend suggested how the fluoridation of water outside the area to which the application applies could be got around—by other applications to cover those other areas. Should such applications be made if the water in those other areas is affected minimally? At what level and in what circumstances should an application be made?

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend has asked several questions. I shall not answer them because others wish to speak. My hon. Friend is right to say that to reject the amendment is to kill the concept of fluoridation. I have attempted to be helpful. I accept the fact that the Bill received a Second Reading and that it was not defeated in another place, however the vote in favour of it was assembled. Much has already been said about that. I accept that the democratic will of the House is that the Bill be enacted, so I am not suggesting that it be killed; I am merely suggesting how safeguards can be introduced. That is why I have tabled the three amendments on the Notice Paper. The most important is amendment (e), which proposes in line 1, at end add and insert

"provided that no resolution of any local authority or community health council within the area exists opposing artificial fluoridation of the water supplies."

The amendment would enable the Bill to be enacted and create a safeguard which many of us want in the interests of the British people.

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I hope that my hon. Friends will not think me discourteous if I do not follow their arguments but rather take my own line.

Clause 1(1) is the principal provision of the Bill. This is the provision which will almost certainly result in millions of people having to take more fluoride, irrespective of whether they want it or not, and even if they very much do not want it. We really ought therefore to be sure of what the provision means and how it will work. It is extremely difficult to be sure of either after listening to as much of this debate as I have. Let me examine it myself to see whether I can be more sure of it.

It is pretty clear that if the Lords amendment is accepted, the fluoridation ought still to be limited to the area to which the application relates. What worries me is how on earth anybody will know. That could be so even if the other words are included, but the additional words which it is now proposed to leave out do at least draw the attention of water undertakers to something that they must not do and make it clear that they must not do it.

Before I give the impression that those words are clear, I must say that they are not. They are as much of a muddle as the rest of the clause and do not clarify it as much as I should like. They are not even grammatical. I am not sure whether we should read the "and" in the middle as if this is a hendiadys, or as if there are two separate parts. One thing is clear, however, while the words remain there, namely, that the water authority must not add fluoride if that entails there being more fluoride outside the area which figures in the application.

I have listened to everything that my hon. Friend on the Front Bench below the Gangway has said. I shall not say with how much of it I agree. I am trying to stick to things that are clear. The one thing that is clear is that so long as those words remain the water authority is put on notice that it must not add fluoride even within the area to which the application relates if greater fluoridation would thereby spread into other areas.

10.30 pm

I do not regard the additional words as very satisfactory either. They are not even grammatical. They should, I think, read:

"provided it is in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker reasonably practicable to do so and without, etc."

But it is made clear that such an undertaker must not add fluoride unless it can confine the added fluoride to the area in question.

There are therefore two sets of uncertainty, and it is not easy to tell which is the least unsatisfactory. To help me arrive at a conclusion, I pray in aid the principle that those who propose fluoridation—which many others do not want—have the burden of justifying it. It should be upon them to ensure clarity.

I shall not rehearse the views that I have frequently expressed in the Chamber as to why I place that burden on those who want to do this, and I shall say no more about the evils of compulsory medication against the will of anyone, let alone against the will of substantial numbers. But I hope that the House will never lose sight of the important principles of personal freedom involved in those arguments.

I want to relate a story of something that happened to me this evening. I was discussing this matter with a friend and he asked, "Why don't you want it?" I told him, and then I asked, "Why do you want it?" He replied, "Because I want to look after the teeth of my children." I said, "But you have that absolutely the wrong way round. You want it because you do not want to look after the teeth of your children. You want authority to look after the teeth of your children, and in order to shift that burden on to authority you are willing to foist what you want on to people who do not want it." For me that conversation encapsulates so much of what I so dislike about what is being done, and I find it difficult to understand how many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, for whom I have such respect, can be party to it.

I pray all of this in aid because I believe that the onus is on those who want fluoridation to justify it and to ensure clarity. We have now reached the point at which that cannot be achieved, so we must chose the lesser of two evils. For me, that is to leave the words in the clause to make it absolutely clear that a water authority cannot add fluoride unless it can ensure that the fluoride will not go outside the area specified in the application.

Sir John Page *rose*——

Sir Ian Percival: I give way to my hon. Friend, only because he looks at me with such appealing eyes.

Sir John Page: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for allowing me to intervene, because I respect tremendously what he says. Does he accept that the amendment leaves it crystal clear that a water undertaker may not increase the fluoride content in the water supplied by it outside the specified area? It is technically feasible, and nothing is more simple and straightforward than to keep the fluoride in water within the specified area. Technically, there is nothing to it.

Sir Ian Percival: I knew that I should have resisted my hon. Friend's appealing eyes. I guessed that he wanted to make a second speech, particularly that part of his previous one which unfortunately I did not hear. I repeat that it may be clear to him, but it is not clear to me. The test should be whether it is clear to everyone. If it was clear to me I would be the first to say so, but I remind my hon. Friend that I said that I too think it means what he thinks is clear, but I am not so sure as he is that it is as clear as he thinks.

As I have said, the amendment also has this defect: even if what is left would be clear, how in the world would anybody know whether effect had been given to it? The additional words put the water authority on notice that it must pay attention to this point and ensure that the fluoride does not go outside the area specified. For that reason, I consider it marginally preferable that the extra words should remain in. But let there be no misunderstanding. Either way, the position is unsatisfactory, and that is another reason why I shall vote against this Lords amendment, if I have the chance. I shall do so to show once again what I think of the Bill in principle, this subsection in particular, and the confusion around which this debate has, not exactly raged, but continued for so long.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am sorry to begin with a note of caution, but it was disappointing to hear some hon. Members attack the Leicestershire community health council survey entitled, "Fluoridation in Leicestershire". I do not know all the people who took part, but I know that it was an unbiased survey. The last paragraph states:

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

"Many conclusions and interpretations can, and doubtless will, be drawn by the differing lobbies, from the data contained in this report, but it is not the intention of the Leicestershire Community Health Council to so indulge itself. An unbiased survey has been conducted; the view of 5,590 persons obtained and their opinions honestly and clearly depicted within these pages. It is the sincere hope of the Leicestershire Community Health Council that full account will be taken of their wishes."

It is rather sad that a report which involved 148 parish councils is called "biased".

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruinvels: The Lords amendment is bad. It is unreasonable for a water authority to ignore the wishes——

Mr. Terry Davis: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is a poll conducted by some parish councils and the community health council in Leicestershire relevant to the Lords amendment?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It seemed to me to be stretching matters a little, but it might be construed as being relevant to the arguments being advanced.

Mr. Bruinvels: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Indeed, the survey was mentioned first by not me but by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). We are talking about whether it is reasonable——

Mr. Terry Davis: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House. Everyone who was present will remember that the matter was introduced by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). The hon. Gentleman must be scared of something if he is behaving in this way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did not intend to mislead the House, if indeed he did.

Mr. Bruinvels: I would never wish to mislead the House. I enjoy being here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I enjoy your indulgence. However, I repeat that the person who questioned the validity of the survey was the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. All that I am trying to show is that the survey was a reasonable one, which resulted in Leicestershire community health council being congratulated throughout the county, and Leicestershire health authority now listening to the views of the people who took part in the survey. It is important, because it proves that the water authority must also listen to the wishes of the people who reside in the county. They have a valid wish not to have fluoride in their water supply.

The survey asked:

"Who do you think should take the decision whether or not to add fluoride to the public water supply?"

In reply, 1,001 people thought the national Government should; 752 believed that local government should, 1,003 believed that the water authority should; and 2,265 believed that the local health authority should. Therefore, the question that we must ask is whether it is reasonable and practicable to involve the community health council. Of course it is, and it is certainly wrong and unfair for the health authority to ignore the wishes of the community health council.

Mr. Dobson: Is it only in this respect that the hon. Gentleman wishes the House to agree with the views of Leicestershire community health council, or does he agree with everything that it says?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I fail to see what that has to do with the Bill.

Mr. Bruinvels: I presume that I need not answer that question, but I shall say that I agree with the council when it conducts such a survey. I had no influence in the survey, and it is notable that the council was courageous enough to undertake a public opinion survey. It had no fixed views and was not approached by either the pure water, fluoride or anti-fluoride associations. It did it off its own bat, paid for it itself, and is to be congratulated on it. As I have the honour to represent part of the area within which the survey was conducted, I am delighted to congratulate Brian Marshall and his team on carrying it out. I am sorry that some hon. Members are frightened at what it revealed. The survey released on 11 September 1985 clearly showed that the majority of British people did not want fluoride added to their water compulsorily, even if it was good for them.

It is important that no statutory water undertaker should be allowed to introduce further fluoridation without the approval of the people who drink that water supply. What is available to those people who do not want fluoridated water is still in question. How can there be consultation without the opportunity for it? How can there be consultation without the opportunity for it? Leicester community health council has allowed us that opportunity, but many other areas have not.

Many people do not want fluoride, and in the United States regular referendums are held, yet fluoride is to be added to our supplies without the authority o the people who pay the bills for having water piped to their homes.

I am particularly worried about drought. As soon as the Minister responsible for water was appointed——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has crossed the line. I hope that he will speak more closely to the amendment under discussion.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am speaking to amendment *(d)*, which deals with the point that the fluoride content of the water supplied to areas outside that covered by the application may not be increased. There will be occasional shortages of water when it must be brought in. In those cases——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is addressing himself to an amendment which has not been selected for debate.

10.45 pm

Mr. Bruinvels: With respect, it is part of Lords amendment No. 1. We are talking about the dangers of water being corroded by foreign bodies if fluoridation is introduced——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is perhaps being a little misled. We are discussing only Lords amendment No. 1. The amendments tabled by his hon. Friends and himself have not been selected for debate.

Mr. Bruinvels: Prior to regular interruptions by some hon. Members who may not be pleased with some of our

views — there is in this Chamber such a thing as freedom and courtesy — we were discussing artificial fluoridation having to be discontinued.

Only a few weeks ago it was said that that could not happen. Well, it has happened. On 20 May 1985 the South Derbyshire health authority disclosed that its 14-year old fluoridation scheme had ceased in October 1984 because the new water supply system meant that it could no longer have an exclusive supply of artificially fluoridated water — it would fluoridate water for Nottingham and Leicester.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): The authority is, in fact, called the Southern Derbyshire health authority. A large amount of water in that area is already naturally fluoridated.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her intervention. I note that she has recently joined us in the Chamber.

We do not want any problems in Leicester, which does not want fluoridated water. It is not reasonable or practicable to have that water appearing in our area.

Mr. Lawrence: The decision of the Southern Derbyshire health authority not to continue with the fluoridation of water because it would contaminate areas that did not wish to have fluoridation appears to have been taken after the publication of this Bill, which contained in clause 1(1) the proviso that, the application should not increase the fluoride content of the water supplied to areas not covered by the application.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the publication of the Bill may have influenced the decision of the authority, which no doubt knew what the legislation contained? The removal of that safeguard by another place, which is what we are debating, takes away the reminder to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) referred. Does it not underline the danger of taking out that safeguard?

Mr. Bruinvels: That is the very point — it will happen unless we overturn the Lords amendment. We must make that strict instruction clear so that all water authorities are reminded that they must not tamper with the water of a neighbouring authority. There is no way in which the areas can be cross covered.

The Leicestershire community health council, which set a good example, is still worried that its views are being ignored. Other health authorities will, I hope, listen to what the community health council suggested. I should have preferred not to go through all the stages to Lords amendments until we had taken further opinion polls to guage the views of the people.

All persons of sound mind have a right to choose what they and their children will or will not consume, and the bodily treatment which they will or will not have in their everyday lives to maintain health and prevent disease. Fluoridation deprives consumers of water to which fluoride has been deliberately added of this right, forcing one and all to consume more fluoride in uncontrolled and uncontrollable amounts.

It is reasonable to believe that it will be possible to restrict the amount of fluoride to be added to water supplies? I fear that, rather than keeping fluoride to a minimum, we shall be increasing its use. I am alarmed by what is happening, because this is a totalitarian action. We are a democracy. We make surveys and listen to the views of the people. We in Leicestershire do not want the national Government to tell us whether we should have fluoride in our water. That is a matter for the local health authority to decide. We are going too fast in this matter. We need a public referendum, rather than rule by diktat, and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am endeavouring to be flexible and tolerant with the hon. Member, but he is now going beyond what is reasonable. This is not a Second Reading debate. The House has given the measure a Second Reading. References to referendums are not within the scope of the debate on the amendment.

Mr. Bruinvels: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am extremely concerned about the state of play tonight. This is a bad amendment, and even at this late stage I am desperately trying to stop fluoride being added to our water. The health authority is out of touch with the wishes of the people. Althought we are having a free vote for many hon. Members, the payroll vote will defeat the wishes of the people in the country.

The addition of fluoride has not been proved to be successful. It might help youngsters, but it does not necessarily help other people. As a loyal Conservative, I regret to say that this is a bad Bill, and I urge my hon. Friends to support those who do not want fluoride added to their water supply without their consent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Some of my concerns about the amendment have already been voiced by my hon. Friends. With how many nonsenses are we dealing in considering the Bill? It is not of earth-shattering moment, our constituents are not impressed by it, and it is regarded lightly at best or otherwise greatly feared because of its compulsory mass medication aspect.

In the months that have passed since the measure was before the House the Bill seems to have changed out of all recognition, for what little protection was previously in it is now being struck out by the amendment. It has been suggested that the amendment will make the subsection crystal clear. I could only think that, at best, that was a pun on words in a water context, for I support my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) in saying that it is a tragedy that that protection is being removed.

After all, the words that the amendment seek to delete are specific. They are most specific about the onus of responsibility that was to be on a water authority, and the concern that it must have for adjacent or other areas that would be affected by the fluoridation of one area in response to an application by a health authority. With what protection are we left after striking out that? There will be the clear implication that Parliament is saying that there need be no concern, and any area alongside or even some way away can be fluoridated without an application by a health authority.

In our earlier debates, concern was expressed about whether a health authority was the right body to make such applications. It is possible that the health authority for Ynys Môn represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) might make an application for the water in its area to be fluoridated. Although it is an island off the north-west corner of Wales, it has the same water authority as my constituency of Cardiff, North, 200 miles away.

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

The implication of Lords amendment No. 1, which takes out the firm responsibility placed on the water authority, is that there is now nothing to encourage, let alone compel, the water authority not to treat Cardiff water in the same way as that for Ynys Môn.

Just because the Ynys Môn health authority has asked for fluoridation the Welsh water authority can now, when it orders the special equipment to supply Ynys Môn with fluoridated water standardise, and order the same equipment for every area.

The Bill is far worse now than it was when we last debated it in March, on that last long night. I can sympathise with my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), in referring to opinion polls or any other such test of opinion. The Bill has been altered dramatically, particularly by Lords amendment No. 1, from when we gave such long consideration debating to 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and even until 9 o'clock the following night on the last occasion. The Bill has changed so much that it should not be bulldozed through at the tail-end of the Session, when debate is necessarily confined to the Lords amendments.

I feel as strongly as any hon. Member who has spoken about Lords amendment No. 1. At the very least, it must be struck out so that the direct instruction to the water authorities is retained. If health authorities are to be the bodies making the requests to fluoridate an area, other areas that might come within the water authority deserve the protection that is now being denied to them by the amendment. I hope that we can take out the amendment, although, like my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East, I would dearly love to kill the whole dreadful Bill.

11 pm

Mr. Golding I support the Lords amendment. Those Conservative Members who oppose it are misguided. I apply this test to it: it must have been a daft amendment to have been passed, because all of our sensible, sound amendment were whipped against and defeated by the Government. The Government only allowed those amendments which support fluoridation to be passed. The other place was right to flush out the Government and to say to them that this amendment is a nonsense. Of course it is a nonsense. Why did the Government permit it to be agreed to? It was to keep the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) happy, to give him a moment of pleasure and a degree of satisfaction that on one point at least his parliamentary career has been successful.

I shall probably vote for this daft amendment, in the belief that those hon. Members who oppose fluoridation will be successful. It says that a statutory water undertaker may increase

"the fluoride content of the water supplied by them within that area, provided that it is in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker reasonably practicable to do so."

A statutory water undertaker may increase the fluoride content of the water if he believes that it is reasonably practicable to do so. If the amendment said that the statutory water undertaker can do it, provided that it believes it to be reasonably practicable, it would make sense. But it makes no sense to say that the undertaker may do it if he believes that it is reasonably practicable to do so. The undertaker would not dream of doing it if it thought that it was impracticable. The amendment is a nonsense.

Mr. Lawrence: Can I put to the hon. Gentleman the point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). The result of this clause is that large areas of the country will probably have their water supplies fluoridated because the water undertaker and the health authority may decide to introduce fluoride into the water. Unless a restriction is laid down which draws to the attention of the water undertaker the need to be reasonably practicable or to restrict the use of fluoridated water to areas within a particular boundary, does not the hon. Gentleman consider that the mere use of the word "may" means that all of the defences are down and that any water undertaker can stand up without fear of contradiction and introduce this dreaded substance into the water supply, even though it is not wanted? Is that not the danger. Will the hon. Gentleman kindly address himself to the position if that marker is deleted?

Mr. Golding: I am not defending the Bill. It is abhorrent. Clause 1 is abhorrent. I do not think that this will be a good marker. If we had been wise enough to say, "provided it is in the opinion of" the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyne, and if responsibility had been placed on those two distinguished Staffordshire Members of Parliament to decide whether it was reasonably practicable, it would have made sense. It is no marker to say to a water authority, "You may do this, but you may do it only if you think that it is reasonably practicable." That is no restriction and is not worth having. What will happen? The people who are hell bent on poisoning the water supply will not admit that what they are about to do is not reasonably practicable. They will say, "It is reasonably practicable so we may do it."

If the hon. Member for Harrow, West who proposed the amendment in the first place had thought of that, he would have proposed that the test should be applied by the Staffordshire Members of Parliament. We would have applied an objective test and taken a detached view. The statutory water authorities will be prejudiced and will take a subjective view. There is no defence in the amendment.

I do not know whether the hon. and learned Member for Burton will say that it is better than nothing. Certainly it is not perfect. We must accept that their Lordships were right to say that it was not worth having these words. They are a sop permitted by the Government and the payroll vote to one of the more distinguished Members on their side.

Mr. Lawrence: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again. It was not just that it was a sop to one of our distinguished colleagues; it was the fact that the Bill would never have come about if the water authorities had not demanded it. Will the hon. Gentleman take that matter on board?

Mr. Golding: It was not only the water authorities that demanded it. The hon. and learned Gentleman has exposed all the pressure groups and prejudiced people who have tried to foist this legislation on us.

Mr. Lawrence: The water authorities broke the camel's back.

Mr. Golding: I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying from a sedentary position that the water authorities drove it through. I am not sure about putting all the responsibility upon them. I think it was misguided health authorities——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. On this amendment we cannot discuss what are the presumed reasons for the introduction of the legislation. We should stick to the amendment that is before the House.

Mr. Golding: I totally agree and I regret having given way to the temptation to comment on sedentary interruptions. If there were fewer sedentary interruptions, I would be less tempted to reply to them. The constant danger is that the sedentary interruption is reported in *Hansard* and it looks to one's own constituents and to the world outside that one has no answer. That is why I am tempted to comment. If a little more order were imposed on those hon. Members opposing this amendment, it would be helpful. The amendment says,

" . . . provided it is in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker reasonably practicable to do so and without at the same time increasing the fluoride content of the water supplied by them to areas outside that covered by the application."

Hon. Gentlemen on the Government side will explain to me what that means, perhaps after I resume my seat. I do not understand what it means, I am lost. I do not know whether it is the grammar or the syntax or what it is, but it does not seem to be perfect.

" . . . it is in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker reasonably practicable to do so and without at the same time . . . "

I do not understand how that follows and I keep on puzzling about it. What does it mean? I heard only a moment or two of the speech by the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). I had to go to find out about fog conditions in the midlands, but I heard him begin his speech supporting the rebellion on the Government Benches by saying we wanted clarity. There is no clarity here. The sentence does not seem to hang together. Who can explain to me what is meant by,

" . . . without at the same time increasing . . . "

Where does that tie into the sentence? I look pleadingly at the hon. Gentleman who moved the amendment. What does that relate to? It is suspended in space and it is as though he forgot to put some words in. That may happen: it is one of the dangers of the technical revolution. Word processors are all very well, but sometimes the word processer misses words, and words must have been left out of this amendment. It is bad enough inflicting fluoride on the population, but how can one inflict this wording on them at the same time?

I agree with the hon. Gentleman on the Government side that nobody ought to have fluoride inflicted upon him. If that is not possible, then no one should have fluoride inflicted upon him in an area where the health authority and that person's authority have opposed fluoridation. That must be acceptable to Government, or should be. If they are writing into the legislation that everything depends on health authorities applying in writing and statutory water undertakers agreeing to it, if they are talking about agreement between the health authority and the water undertaker, then the logic of that is that when those bodies do not want fluoridation, fluoridation should not take place. I have sympathy with those hon. Members on the Government Benches who say clearly that fluoridation should not take place in those circumstances. But does the clause say that? Will Conservative Members tell me that I have got the wrong end of the stick and that the Bill is clear?

11.15 pm

I have listened to the Conservative lawyers tonight. That is a terrible combination; to be a lawyer is bad, to be a Tory is terrible, but to be a Tory lawyer is worse. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) said that he did not think that he had made us any the wiser, because he had given a complicated explanation. However, he chastised my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and claimed that all people were very clear in what they said. That did not make sense.

The Tory lawyers do not seem to understand what the clause means. In that case, we should not be putting it into legislation. When I was a Whip on a Committee, a Conservative Member asked the Labour Minister to explain a clause. The Minister did not give a straightforward explanation and the hon. Member, who was courteous and tolerant, asked again, "Will the Minister tell us what the clause means?" There was no reply. The hon. Member, who was one of the most tolerant Members that I have ever known, then said, "Let me put it this way. If a constituent came to the Minister's surgery on a Saturday morning and asked him what the clause meant, what explanation would the Minister give?" I shall remember the Minister's reply to my dying day. He said, "If a constituent asked me what the clause meant, I would tell him to consult a lawyer." That is not the spirit in which to pass legislation.

If lawyers do not understand this clause, how can we expect people outside to understand it? I withdraw that question; I am being unfair to the people outside. If all the supporters of the clause say that they do not understand it and cannot explain how it hangs together, how can we justify its inclusion in the Bill? It is crackers.

The responsibility lies with those who oppose the legislation. It is not the Government's fault. Their object has been to foist rotten legislation on the nation. They have given way to the health lobby and succumbed to all the arguments of the professional health industry. Those of us who are more interested in freedom than in health have opposed the measure. It is, and has been, our responsibility to get it right. I must say to the hon. Gentlemen opposite that we did not get it right and, because we did not get it right, we really must not be muleish, stubborn, pig-headed, and say, "Ah, the Lords have seen through us, the Lords have exposed our weakness, but because we do not like the legislation we are digging our heels in." We ought to be bigger than that and acknowledge that we got it wrong. Our case was right, our objections were well founded but the amendment that we moved, for which hon. Members accept collective responsibility, was defective and we failed our people. Let us say that tonight instead of trying to insist that this defective amendment should remain.

If it is removed, we will not actually get a different result because the wording of this is not such as to prevent fluoridated water being taken from one area where bodies, perhaps representing the people, have decided that the water can be fluoridated to areas where that is not the case. The wording will not do that. It is very clear that, whether the wording is in or out, water is going to pass from one area to another.

I say this because it does not seem to me that the problem that I raised here as the Bill was passing through this place was tackled in the Lords. The Bill does not include only reservoir water; it is not confined to water which itself is confined in lakes and reservoirs. It was established as the Bill went through the House that if applies equally to flowing water. If water is fluoridated, how on earth can anybody stop its flow? How can this particular piece of legislation do that? Certainly the amendment does not. The amendment that we passed did

[Mr. Golding]

not say—perhaps it ought to have said—that water should never be fluoridated where there is a risk that it will pass from an area in which permission has been given to another area.

This amendment should rest in the Bill. The Lords were right to correct all the mistakes that we made. All that we should do tonight is to apologised to the people whiom we represent because the safeguards that we wrote into the legislation were not strong enough, and we ought to have realised that when the Government did not resist them at the time of the debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the Bill passes into law it will affect Scotland as well as England and Wales. You will also be aware that until now the debate has concentrated largely on the problems that will occur in England and Wales when this part of the Bill, were it to be passed, comes into operation. You will, of course, also be aware that the law in Scotland is different from the law in England and Wales, and that the statutory water undertakings in Scotland are quite different from those in England and Wales.

As the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) said, the lawyers who spoke so eloquently in the debate did not know what the amendment meant or how it would effect water undertakings in England and Wales. I drew attention to the difference in Scotland and that caused interest, but there was little response to the problems that would be caused by the amendment.

In England and Wales the statutory bodies are appointed. In Scotland the water authorities are the regional councils, which are elected. There is an immense difference between an elected and an appointed body.

Many difficulties would arise if the words were taken out of subsection (1), as suggested in the Lords amendment. The relevant words are:

"provided it is in the opinion of the statutory water undertaker"—

in Scotland that is the regional authority—

"reasonably practicable to do so".

Time has been devoted to discussing what "reasonably practicable" means in England and Wales. It probably means much the same in Scotland, although I am not a lawyer.

The Bill was drafted because a lady in Scotland took the regional authority to court and won her case, much to the astonishment of the authority, because it thought that it had the power to put fluoride in Scotland's water. The Scottish courts decided that it did not have that power and that resulted in an enormous lobby of support for the Bill.

Hon. Members have referred to oninion polls and to asking the electorate to vote on whether certain action should be taken. That means asking people whether they would be prepared to have their water fluoridated and whether they would vote for it.

The area of Scotland which I represent has beautiful highland water, untouched by any of the ghastly things that we put into waters elsewhere. The Tayside regional authority—the water authority—has said that it will not fluoridate the water. That is vital because if the words which we are discussing are deleted the areas outside that covered by the application will be affected. What will be the effect of the amendment if areas outside Tayside decide to go ahead with fluoridation? I share the view expressed by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

11.30 pm

Tayside region has voted clearly. Its council has stated that it will not fluoridate our beautiful clear highland water, but what will happen in the kind of situation that occurred this year? People talk about droughts, but we have had the opposite problem. We have had far too much water, and for various reasons water overflows from one authority area to another. That means that fluoridated water could come into Tayside region even though the regional authority is adamant that it will not fluoridate its water.

I am not opposing the amendment. I am seeking clarification. Will the amendment strengthen the hand of the water undertaker—in this case the Tayside regional authority—in saying yea or nay? I think that this is a bad Bill, and an even worse amendment, because I do not understand it, but if my right hon. Friend the Minister can give me that assurance I shall be happier than I was when we last discussed the subsection, before it was amended in another place.

In this House we spend a great deal of time on legislation, but we often miss the obvious. It is obvious to me that there are great difficulties in producing legislation that can be operated properly and effectively when Scotland has different laws and differently constituted undertakers operating differently both by law and in practice. I hope that my right hon. Friend can assure me that the Tayside regional authority will be strengthened by the amendment in taking the decisions that it wishes to take. Whether the decision is for or against fluoridation is not important.

I have sat through these debates from the beginning, and virtually all the arguments have been based on the problems of England and Wales. I do not want an amendment put into statute which solves the problems faced by non-elected statutory bodies in England and Wales if the elected water authorities in Scotland are in any way disadvantaged by it. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the Scottish water authorities will not be disadvantaged and that the amendment will not affect their ability to operate the subsection as they otherwise might have done?

So far, I have had no explanation at all on that point. I have read the debates on this amendment in the other place and I have not been assured. Doubt and lack of explanation influence one's vote. Although I oppose compulsory fluoridation, I would support an amendment that gave my authority the right to say no as well as yes.

Mr. Terry Davis: I shall leave it to the Minister to reply to the question asked by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I should like to comment on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). He and I strongly disagree about the merits of fluoridation. He, I think, would regard me as part of the health lobby. Having listened carefully to his speech, I conclude that the fog this evening is not restricted to the west midlands.

My hon. Friend and I agree about the Lords amendment —we will both support it if it is pressed to a Division—and the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) can hardly describe me as part of the payroll vote. I assume that the Minister will recommend support for the Lords

amendment. My hon. Friend and I agree about something else: it is difficult to refuse to reply to sedentary interventions. Constituents assume that if a Member refuses to reply, he does not have any answer to the interruption. The point is even more valid in regard to an hon. Member refusing to give way to another who wishes to press him on a point. That is what happened today when I tried to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Leicester, East when he described the poll conducted in Leicestershire. It was a pity that I was unable to make several points about the way in which the sample was derived. The hon. Gentleman's constituents must conclude, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme said, that he was afraid of the question because he was not confident of the answer.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) also asserted that the majority of people in Britain oppose fluoridation. He, with his usual courtesy, gave way when I wanted to intervene to ask for evidence of that assertion, but he then took shelter in the rules of order. He regarded his assertion as being in order but did not regard providing evidence of that assertion as being in order. I therefore conclude that he, too, does not have the answers to the questions.

Mr. Hayhoe: With the leave of the House, I should like to respond briefly to the debate.

I want only to re-emphasise that the amendment's purpose is very limited. It removes superfluous and perhaps legally ambiguous words from the Bill. I must reject and repudiate the absurdly exaggerated and emotive comments made by some of my hon. Friends on matters which have been fully debated and fully answered previously in our long discussions on the Bill. I commend the Lords amendment to the House.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 14.

Division No. 299] [11.38 pm

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Golding, John
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Best, Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hickmet, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Skinner, Dennis
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. Bill Walker.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 16, after "so" insert "—*(a)*"

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 3, in page 2, line 17, at end insert

"; or

(b) in connection with the carrying out of any works (including cleaning and maintenance) by any of them."

Amendment *(a)*, in line 1, leave out 'to end of line 13' and insert 'to "without" in line 11'.

Amendment *(b)*, in line 1, at end add 'and insert

"provided that they are requested to do so by a resolution of each local authority whose area falls wholly or partly within the area affected by the application".'.

Amendment *(d)*, in line 1, at end add

'and insert "provided that it may not increase the fluoride content of the water supplied by them to areas outside that covered by the application.".'.

Mr. Whitney: Clause 1(5) as currently drafted allows a statutory water undertaker to supply fluoridated water on a temporary basis to an area whose health authority has not requested it to deal with an emergency. An emergency is currently defined in clause 1(7). This simply provides a specific statutory power for current practice. However, it was brought to our attention in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) that the Bill should also provide for the current practice whereby fluoridated water must be supplied to a non-requesting area because of routine maintenance, such as cleansing or pump maintenance. As such maintenance is planned and carried out on a regular basis, it cannot fall within the definition of an emergency. This amendment remedies that omission.

I would stress that neither the amendment nor the text of clause 1(6)—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Members who are standing at the Bar either withdraw from the Chamber or make less noise?

Mr. Whitney: Neither the amendment nor the existing text of clause 1(6) provides a legal power to fluoridate a normally unfluoridated area, except for the duration of the emergency or the maintenance work. As soon as the emergency or work is over, the supply of non-fluoridated water must be resumed.

I commend the amendment as a small, but useful, addition to the Bill.

Sir John Page: It is again my pleasure to thank my hon. Friend the Minister for accepting amendments which were suggested by me in Committee, where I declared an interest as a director of a water company and as a spokesman for the water industry. Some of the criticisms made by my hon. Friends—mostly hon. and learned Friends—contain an element of slur against the water industry, which is especially responsible, efficient and effective. From the way in which some of my hon. Friends speak, it sounds as though water undertakings would be casual about their responsibility to provide wholesome water to the community, which I believe that they have done efficiently and effectively for more than 100 years. It is obviously right that in an emergency fluoridated water might have to be passed to a non-designated area. It is obviously also sensible, as the Minister said, to make such provision for routine maintenance.

If the Bound Volume of *Hansard* of the debate were to be given a name, perhaps it should be called "Ivan the Terrible" or "The Worst of Best". Both seem to be appropriate, but an even better name is "As the weary hours of the night go on".

Mr. Lawrence: I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for selecting the amendments in my name.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page). If I could take a page out of his leaf, I would try to work a pun into his name. When I was recently in Moscow, I learnt that Ivan the Terrible did not mean Ivan the Terrifying but Ivan the Awesome. Therefore, I hope that from now on people who refer to me as Ivan the Terrible will be in proper awe of my sensible remarks.

I do not attack the water authorities for the way in which they provide, have provided and intend to provide, water, but because they are the motive power behind the Bill, and the Government fall over themselves backwards to accept any amendment, however well or badly worded. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West told us how the last proviso in clause 1 was added on the back of a menu in the best musical composers' traditions. The Government immediately snapped it up and added it to a Bill which would have become an Act, if the Lords had not decided that it was nonsense.

If the water authorities, specifically the Severn-Trent water authority, had not said to the Government, "Come on. Now that Lord Jauncey has said that this is unlawful, please regularise the position, otherwise we shall have to claim large sums from you"—I do not know their precise argument—the Government, who are usually committed to the freedom and rights of the individual, and who pre-eminently stand through the Conservative party for the right of freedom above all, would not have lent themselves to mass medication and the worst act of collectivism one can consider. The water authorities have insisted that such a Bill be passed to regularise the position, and that is our criticism of them. It is not a slur, but a downright criticism because, but for their activities the Bill would not be being considered and would not shortly reach the statute book, as a result of which many areas which do not have fluoridated water will probably have it.

It is all very well for the water authorities to say, "We are neutral in the matter. We do not particularly want fluoride, but we are under pressure from the health authorities and, therefore, please introduce legislation to make it lawful for us to fluoridate the country. Help us get the health authorities off our backs and have an easy life." If that is one's attitide in this world, one cannot expect praise. The water authorities should not expect praise, and my hon. Friend, who represents them so well in the House, should not be particularly sensitive when we say that they do not require praise, but condemnation.

Again, my objection to the matter is that the amendment expands the effects of the Bill. It extends the opportunity for fluoridation in the nation's water. It does more than this House gave permission for it to do. It extends the power of the fluoridators.

12 midnight

People who have changed their views on this matter keep telling me that the Whips have made concessions. They are not making concessions to those who do not want this substance forced down their throats; they are making concessions to the water authorities and those who want that. It is an expansion of the terms of the Bill. We gave our permission only for the water authorities to fluoridate water in an area where there was not usually fluoride—because it was not wanted—in an emergency. That is good sense. We can imagine an emergency where something goes wrong with a water supply and people are without water to wash or to flush their lavatories.

Given that this rotten Bill will be on the statute book, those who oppose fluoridation on principle and because it is harmful would not object to an exception for an emergency. But this goes further than emergency; it is an open gate through which the unruly horse of the do-gooders—the bureaucrats, those who say, "Never mind freedom, we know better", those who want the health authority off their backs—want to bolt. Their Lordships want to extend it to include:

"in connection with the carrying out of any works (including cleaning and maintenance) by any of them."

I have no objection to the words "cleaning and maintenance" because that is obviously good sense. However, I object to authorities being allowed to fluoridate areas where there is no request or permission for or no decision to fluoridate, but simply where the neighbouring authority wants to carry out any works—that is, not just cleaning, maintenance or emergency works.

What does that mean? It means a very wide hole. A water authority may wish to extend its pipes, to put in a new kind of pipe or to develop some high-tech equipment with which it wishes to exeriment—all of which may take a considerable time. If one visited a computer unit in my constituency, in one of the largest firms, one would go in one door and see that unit full of computers. But they are not stationary—they are moving out because at another door new computers are moving in. All we would see is computers moving through—bigger ones, wider ones, fatter ones, shorter ones. Modern technology does not allow a computer to stand still for five minutes. I do not know whether our water pipes can or will be computerised, but that is the sort of thing that happens with modern technology. There is always movement and change.

If a water authority decides that it wishes to undertake any work—I repeat, any work—no one can challenge that. In a court a judge would say, "The expression 'any works' is very wide—it is not cleaning works or maintenance works or emergency works, but any works." The authority can fluoridate the water while that work takes place—perhaps for six months or a year. The poor people in the area who voted against fluoridation and persuaded the health and water authorities that they could not have fluoridation are stuck with it because "any works" is what their Lordships permit in their amendment. That would cause harm.

I do not want to bore the House, and no doubt I should be ruled out of order if I tried, but we have spent sufficient time on the passage of the Bill reiterating the well-known harms. Many scientists have said, for example, that this stuff aggravates diabetes, allergic conditions, kidney diseases and thyroid abnormalities and that it has something to do with arthritis, hardening of the arteries and triggering cancer.

On the subject of triggering cancer, perhaps the Minister will report on the latest state of play in the research project that the Medical Research Council is undertaking, at the request of the Department of Health, to identify whether sodium chloride has the ability to induce gene mutations in mouse lymphoma cells.

The Medical Research Council has reported that that project is being carried out in Brighton and that its report will be released later this year. We are now late into the year. If he receives an adverse report, I should like an assurance that the Minister will make it his business to see that fluoridation is stopped while further inquiries are made into whether there is a connection between mouse lymphoma and all sorts of other animal growths whih are caused when reasonably low amounts of fluoridated water pass through their bodies.

This harm is not talked of by a few crackpots. A large number of reputable scientists take this view, and if a handful of experts say it is safe and another handful say it is not safe, what on earth are we doing forcing this substance down people's throats? There is a doubt about it.

The amendment will make it easier to fluoridate more water. Let us not forget the harm that is done to the environment, as the Quebec inquiry discovered, for example to the embryonic development of frogs' eggs and the eggs of trout, preventing them from hatching. That is all part of the harm that fluoridation can cause.

Mr. Golding: The hon. and learned Gentleman is speaking so quickly that some hon. Members may have difficulty in following his argument. If he wishes to persuade my hon. Friends to support him, will he explain in full what that inquiry was about?

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman seems to want me to delay the termination of my speech. I am reluctant to go into more detail, for two reasons. The first is that other hon. Members are present on a free vote, feeling so strongly in favour of fluoridation that it would be an unkindness to expect them to stay much longer. The second is that the hon. Gentleman is perhaps unaware that I made the point in full in my introductory speech, which occupied four and a half hours when the matter was last before the House. That appears in *Hansard*, with all the references, and it would be an abuse of the House if I were to take the hon. Gentleman up on his offer, although I appreciate that he made it with the best of intentions.

Mr. Golding: I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that I do not need to be persuaded of the rightness of his case. I thought that he might care to try to persuade my hon. Friends, who may not have been present to hear his memorable, eloquent contribution in the early hours of the morning some months ago.

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman is most kind, but it does not seem to matter whether his hon. Friends are here or not; they still do not listen. They enter the Chamber and make the speeches they intended to make, having been unaffected by whatever truths have come at them from these Benches. I appreciate, however, that the job of Opposition Members is to oppose, and they oppose any suggestions of ours on the subject of fluoridation. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not here to tell us, but it appears to be part of the Labour party's policy to support fluoridation.

Mr. Golding: The hon. and learned Gentleman is doing my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover a great disservice by saying that. The hon. and learned Gentleman should consult my hon. Friend as to his opinions on this matter. The hon. and learned Gentleman should not be accusing me of departing from party policy.

Mr. Lawrence: I withdraw that remark, because it is wrong that an injustice should be done. The Labour party is divided between those who are in favour of fluoridation, and those who are not, and the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) is of the latter philosophy. I wish that more Labour Members were of that opinion. Some of them have been good enough to join us in the Lobby, which was a wise act, and helped to make up for the fact that hon. Friends have gone into the other Lobby, something about which we can do little.

The harm that has been done by this amendment—giving the opportunity to fluoridate the water—is not just harm about which I am complaining, and about which I have railed on many occasions because it is brought about by taking the opinion of those scientists that one wants to

[Mr. Lawrence]

accept, and rejecting the opinion of those whom one does not want to accept. It is harm that has repeatedly been raised in important councils.

The harm was referred to in the Pittsburg, Texas and Illinois cases, in all of which the judges ruled that fluoridation is unlawful. It has caused West Germany, Greece, Holland, India, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Austria, Belgium, Chile and Denmark to have no fluoridation. Some of these countries, like Switzerland, had fluoridation but then decided to forbid it. Are these countries, and more such as France and Portugal, which has only one experimental plant, depriving their citizens of a health-giving benefit? Is the advice from all their doctors, dentists and politicians all rubbish? Are we, with Northern Ireland and America, the only ones to think that there is no harm? I believe that New Zealand has begun to shut its fluoridation schemes in the past few weeks.

If so many countries, on the advice of their medical people and their freedom-supporting politicians, have decided that there should not be fluoridation, surely there is room for doubt about whether we should be doing it.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): My hon. and learned Friend mentioned New Zealand, and it is important that the House should know what I have heard this evening, that New Zealand is proposing to stop fluoridising the water, and that this is taking place on a regional basis—each authority is looking at the matter. That strikes me as being in sympathy with the amendment. Each local authority should be able to decide for itself. In the light of what is going on in New Zealand—we know that the country is misguided in a number of respects, although in this one it seems to have found some commonsense—is it not appropriate that this measure should be stalled, so that the experience of, and the evidence from, New Zealand can be examined and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. This amendment deals with works. The hon. and learned Gentleman is straying into a general argument about fluoridation. I am sure that he will return to the amendments.

Mr. Lawrence: Certainly I shall, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of your direction, I shall not pursue my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) which I should like to make. Inevitably society will be harmed if there is further fluoridation. The inclusion of the words "any works" would open the floodgates.

I should be grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you would direct that the House should not vote just against the Lords amendment but that it should support the constructive suggestion contained in my amendments: that the words "for maintenance and cleaning" should be retained so that there are three categories of fluoridation where there is no fluoride already in the water. They are emergencies, maintenance and cleaning. However, the House should expunge from the Bill the words "any works" because they are far too wide. I should be grateful if you would consider having a separate vote on those matters.

12.15 am

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has already said that a Division on one of these amendments—*(a)*, *(b)*, or *(d)* —would be acceptable. I am not quite clear upon which amendment the hon. and learned Gentleman would like to have the Division. Perhaps he will say in due course upon which amendment he would like there to be a Division.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for having selected for debate my amendment *(d)*. At the end of the Lords amendment my amendment would add:

"provide that no such works shall continue for a continuous period of more than four weeks unless an application in respect of that other area has been made in accordance with subsection (1)."

Its object is self-explanatory. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page), whose interest in water undertakers is well known, is a stalwart defender of their integrity. I hope that he will acquit me of any charge of impugning their integrity, or of imputing dishonourable motives to them. I accept that water undertakers will wish to discharge their duties to the best of their ability. My concern is that by removing a large part of clause 1 the Government are not giving those water undertakers a fair chance to do so. By not providing guidelines there is room for error. This is unfair to water undertakers.

My amendment is necessary because of the way in which the Lords amendment is drafted. This is another case of fluoridation by stealth. Clause 1 provides that areas outside an area which is the subject of an application will, or can, receive fluoride without being in breach of the legislation. Now water authorities will be able to carry out works, including cleaning and maintenance—I do not demur at that; of course it must be necessary for them to carry out such works—and thereby ensure that areas outside the area that is the subject of an application received fluoridated water for an indefinite period even though there will have been no consultation with the people living in tha area. The trouble is that we do not know what the works might be. They might be new works or the extension of pipes to areas outside an area covered by an application made by a health authority under the legislation if it passes into law——

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that, strictly according to the clause, the matter is entirely at the discretion of the undertaker? The clause does not require the works to have any connection directly with the provision of water. If the authority considered it appropriate, it might be the construction of a new headquarters building, something water authorities have been wont to do in the past few years.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Every time an hon. Member makes a point, a new interpretation can be placed on the proposed legislation which unfortunately, in its wide-ranging generalisation, is capable of a large number of different interpretations. That must be not only impracticable but undesirable for legislation that has the fiat of the House.

To prevent fluoridation by stealth and to ensure that the essence of the Bill is carried out—in other words, that only those areas which are the subject of an application are fluoridated—there must be some curtailment on works which could otherwise permanently extend fluoride to areas outside an area covered by an application without an application ever having to be made in respect of those areas. That would mean that any water authority, not for arcane or malicious reasons but simply because it was a

way of providing new water supplies, could find itself in the position of providing fluoridated water to areas outside the area of an application.

There is nothing in the Bill which allows a water authority to require a health authority to make an application to it for the purposes of extending fluoridation. Therefore, there could be continuing fluoridation outside those areas. For that reason, I hope that my amendment will find favour with the House.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): There are considerable implications in the clause as it is intended to be amended by the Lords amendments under discussion. We are imposing an unfair burden on water authorities. The Government have made it clear throughout the discussion on the Bill that water authorities shall not carry any blame for fluoride being added to the water. One of the central tenets of the Government's arguments in favour of the Bill is that the decision of local health authorities will be the determining factor in deciding whether the water in an area is fluoridated.

I can foresee a problem in that my parliamentary constituency is represented by two district health authorities, one in Scunthorpe and one in Grimsby, and it is therefore conceivable that the Anglian water authority, which serves the whole of my constituency, could receive an application under the proposed legislation from, let us say, the Scunthorpe water authority to have fluoride added to its water supply. The health authority in Grimsby, which serves part of my constituency, might decide not to have fluoride in its water supply. Therefore, half of my constituents will have fluoride added to their water on the decision of the Scunthorpe health authority, and the other half served by the Grimsby health authority might not have fluoride added to the water supply.

My constituency is an area of about 450 square miles, and if any water works are undertaken in, say, the area around Brigg, or the area around Barton or Immingham, which are right on the boundaries of the two health authorities, it is perfectly conceivable that while those works are being carried out some of my constituents will have fluoride in their water supply for an indefinite period. That will be the effect of the proposed Lords amendment. It is therefore right that we should consider the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best).

Is it not unreasonable for the Government to make provision for such an eventuality, because it is conceivable that one could have a breakdown in water supply on the boundary between two local health authorities which have different views on fluoride in the water supply. We know that often when water works are undertaken they can be of long duration. Whenever one engages in some kind of pipework renewal, one does not know how long the work will take until one actually sets about the work, digging up roads and looking at the state of the pipes. In a situation like that, the area around Brigg, for example, would have to take water which might contain fluoride from the Grimsby health authority, or the area around Immingham might have to take water from the waterworks of the Scunthorpe health authority which might or might not contain fluoride. One can see that there could be cause for grave public concern.

I suppose that some people would say that fluoride in the water supply for just a week may not be harmful. I do not think that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) would agree with that. I am perhaps going slightly soft in favour of the Government on this point. One of the arguments which my hon. Friends and I have made about the dangers of fluoride is that we are concerned about the build up over a period of years. If water works are being undertaken for a short time and somebody in a non-fluoridated water area is being asked to accept water from a health authority which has decided to have fluoride in the water supply, it is reasonable to say to him, "Look, this is only for a week, it will not harm you. There is a time limit on it." However, we do not always know in advance how long pipework renovation will take, and that is why I believe that a time limit should be placed on the powers sought by the Government.

12.30 am

We could face fluoridation by stealth. One can imagine a health authority saying to its local population, "You may not be aware of this, but we had to undertake pipework renewal in your area over several months and, under the terms of the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985, you have been receiving fluoride in your water supply during that time. We received no complaints and we do not think that it has done you any harm. We treated it as an experiment and on that basis we shall be making an application to fluoridate the water supply." That could happen if a health authority decided to play the game below the belt.

Those who share my view are right to ask the Government to consider the amendments to the Lords amendments. There must be many constituencies where there are two health authorities and one water authority and people might receive fluoride for a short time. We must have a safeguard to ensure that they will be told if they are to receive fluoride for more than four weeks.

We are not nit-picking. Those who worry about fluoridation by stealth perceive a weakness in the Bill. Local health authorities which do not play fair could misuse the rights given to them under the Bill.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I have been struck by the debate on this group of amendments, particularly on the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) and supported by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). The situation that the latter described is not the only possible one. He referred to the existence of two health authorities and one water undertaking in his constituency. The situation of which I have more experience is one in which there are several water undertakings. There are three or four in my constituency and one health authority. However, one of those undertaking supplies a neighbouring health authority which has long and fiercely resisted the addition of fluoride to the water supply because it believes that it would be a danger to the health of the people that it is intended to serve. This exasperates the water undertakers because they find that they are supplying water to an area determined on grounds of water supply but which contains two health authorities, and they do not know how to cope with the situation. They find it very irritating and wish that the recalcitrant health authority would comply and simplify their task.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that water undertakers exchange water with each other extensively, according to what is going on in the water cycle, which one has an ample supply of water, which river flows need to be maintained in order to preserve

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

fisheries and so on. I can foresee a situation such as the hon. Member has described in which the advantage of works being carried out would be seized upon gleefully.

Can the Minister remember a time in his own constituency when water supply works were not being carried out? As I go about my constituency—and there is not much going on in the more deprived regions of the country these days—the only vehicles that I see are those of the county council, and the water authorities. The deeper we go into winter, the more obvious this is. It is partly the result of our crumbling Victorian heritage of water and sewerage systems, but it is a fact that at any one time a water undertaker, whether it be the Northumbrian water authority, the Newcastle and Gateshead water company or the Coquet water board, will be engaged in works which can be described as relevant for the purposes of this Lords amendment.

Unless the Minister can reassure me that this cannot be implied, there can never be a situation in which, by some process of argument, an authority could not contend that it was justified in introducing fluoridation by stealth into an area which had not even had the benefit of a health authority decision. In my constituency, of course, I am further irritated by the fact that, unlike the people in the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and of my immediate neighbour, the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), I do not even have a democratically elected body making this decision. The decision is made by the health authority. But even that decision could be denied to my constituents in the circumstances described.

The Minister has, therefore, some explaining to do, and I hope that he can say something convincing. I find this Lords amendment wholly unsatisfactory.

12.38 am

Mr. Whitney: For the reasons that I have given, I commend Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 to the House.

My hon. Friends show a fundamental misunderstanding of the realities of the water industry. Necessary routine work may not only be cleaning and maintenance; there may be other work such as relining a main or the installation of new pumps. It is most unlikely that it would take more than four weeks to carry out routine work, but we can never rule out that sort of possibility. It may, for example, be necessary to clean out a service reservoir. To stop the fluoridation while that work was done would interrupt the undoubted benefits which children derive from fluoridation.

I, therefore, urge the House to reject amendments (a), (b) and (d).

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 121, Noes 13.

Division No. 300] **[12.40 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Ground, Patrick
Hickmet, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Skinner, Dennis
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Butterfill and
Mr. John Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 2, line 17, at end insert

"; or

(b) in connection with the carrying out of any works (including cleaning and maintenance) by any of them."

Read a Second time.

Amendment (a) proposed to the Lords amendment, leave out "any works (including".

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 13, Noes 120.

Division No. 301] **[12.50 am**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Butterfill, John
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Golding, John
Ground, Patrick
Hickmet, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ivan Lawrence and
Mr. Keith Best.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

1 am

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 2, line 18, leave out from beginning to end of line 39.

Mr. Hayhoe: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 7, insert the following new clause—*Interpretation etc.*—

" .—(1) In this Act—

"application" means an application under section 1(1);

"appropriate authority", in relation to a fluoridation scheme which is operated by virtue of section *(Continuity of existing fluoridation schemes)*, means the Regional or District Health Authority to whom the statutory water undertaker concerned are answerable in accordance with the arrangements under which the scheme is operated;

"emergency" means an existing or threatened serious deficiency in the supply of water (whether in quantity or quality) caused by an exceptional lack of rain or by any accident or unforseen circumstances;

"health authority" means—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, any District Health Authority (within the meaning of the National Health Service Act 1977); and

(b) in relation to Scotland, any Health Board (within the meaning of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978);

"local authority" means the council of a county or district, the council of a London borough or the Common Council of the City of London; and

"statutory water undertaker" means—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, any water authority or statutory water company within the meaning of the Water Act 1973; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, any water authority within the meaning of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980.

(2) The provisions of this Act apply to the Isles of Scilly as if the Council of the Isles of Scilly were a water authority and as if the Isles were the area of that water authority."

Mr. Hayhoe: These are simply consequential amendments that result from the two Government new clauses relating to the continuity of existing schemes and to publicity and consultation. The two new clauses are in Lords amendments Nos. 5 and 6, which we have still to discuss. I therefore commend these small, technical amendments to the House.

Mr. Lawrence: Consequential and small, technical, amendments they may be, but they reveal an awful deception in the Bill. My amendment (a) has not been accepted for debate and vote, but I consider this issue to be so important that I am driven to ask the House to throw out the definition section in its entirety and to reject Lords amendment No. 7.

The effect would be to make the Government take their Bill away and to re-draft it in the new Session. Although tiresome, that would be far from a tragedy, even from the Government's point of view. Those who will be fluoridated against their will will gain a respite, but that is not my purpose in seeking to reject the amendment.

The definition clause is objectionable because it contains no definition of the word "consult". There is no clear requirement whatsoever in the Bill for anything to be done in the consultation process. "Consult" and "consultation" are words that require definition, otherwise there could be countless legal actions and great expense. The only beneficiaries will be the lawyers, and I know that the lawyers are not very popular with this House.

The undertaking to consult local authorities is the one concession that the Government say they have made to the

[Mr. Lawrence]

anti-fluoridationists. That is very deceptive because it turns out to be no concession at all. It would be a concession if anything was involved in the process of consultation. It would be a concession if, as we had asked, after consultation with the local authorities or the community health councils the water authorities were bound by the effect of that consultation. If, as happens in the west midlands area, nearly every county and district council says that it does not want fluoridation and the water authority, after pressure from the health authority, decides that it does, consultations would have some meaning if what resulted from it was binding. But that suggestion was rejected each time we made it.

We missed winning our case in the House of Lords by only three votes. Two or three of our supporters went home for dinner and forgot to come back; one supporter went into the wrong Lobby; and, unfortunately, one of our strongest supporters died. As a result, the teeth which were generally expected to be put into the Bill were not put in. When the Bill was published, hon. Members seemed to be saying that it was a good idea for the local authorities to control fluoridation. Democratically elected representatives, or, failing that, their nominees on community health councils, could express the wishes of the majority of people in their areas. The understanding was that, as the Bill went through the House, some measure of democratic control would be inserted.

Unfortunately, some people still do not understand—perhaps more understand now than did at the beginning—how important it is not to go ahead in the belief that fluoride is beneficial, when some scientists of repute say that it is not, or that it is completely healthy and safe when some scientists say that it is not. There is a doubt about it. However, there is no doubt about whether there should be democratic control over fluoridation. As the Bill progressed, its opponents were astonished that the Government repeatedly resisted any attempt to provide democratic control before fluoridation is inflicted upon the people who, in vast areas of the country, do not want it or need it, and some of whom consider that it is bad for them in any event.

Therefore, the Bill had no teeth—like most people in Britain, who cannot possibly benefit from fluoridation. Yet it is being forced down their throats as though they could.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to relate the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks to the amendments, which deal with interpretation. Perhaps he can tell me how he relates what he is saying to the amendments.

Mr. Lawrence: The fault is mine, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am obviously not expressing myself clearly enough, and I hope to repair that defect in my presentation.

Although the Government refused to give the Bill any teeth, they did tell us that we could have publicity and consultation. Therefore, we must find out what "consultation" means, and my point is that it means nothing. It is a completely ineffectual word.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am still puzzled by what the hon. and learned Gentleman says. I see nothing about consultation in the amendments. We are dealing with interpretation. Perhaps he has the wrong set of notes and is talking about a later amendment.

Mr. Lawrence: I think not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am suggesting that amendment No. 7, which redrafts the definitions section, should contain a definition of consultation. If it does not, we should scrap the entire clause—lock, stock and barrel—until the Government come back with a definition of consultation which means something. I hope that I have satisfied you Sir, that my remarks are in order.

Therefore, I have suggested — but because the amendment was not selected I cannot——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. and learned Gentleman again, but he knows very well that it is not in order to discuss amendments that have not been selected.

Mr. Lawrence: It is because the amendment has not been selected that I am asking the House to follow me in rejecting the whole new clause. It must be in order for me to say that I reject it because it does not contain a definition of "consultation". It needs to contain one because the authorities make it clear that if it is not defined—and at present it is not defined in the Bill — the clause is meaningless.

I shall refer to the most important cases, which are not without interest because the matters involve planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. In the Hemel Hempstead case of Fletcher and others *v.* Minister of Town and Country Planning, the plaintiffs submitted that no proper consultation took place. Discussions took place, representations were made to the Minister, and opinions were expressed, but, as Mr. Justice Morris said

> "The word 'consultation' is one that is in general use and it is well understood. No useful purpose would be served by formulating words of definition. Nor would it be appropriate to seek to lay down the manner in which consultation must take place. The Act does not proscribe any particular form of consultation. If a complaint is made of failure to consult, it will be for the court to examine the facts and circumstances of the particular case and to decide whether consultation was in fact held."

In other words, if the statute does not define "consultation" or proscribe any particular form of it, the court must decide whether consultation was or was not held. He said

> "Consultation may often be a somewhat continuous process and the happenings of one meeting may form the background of a later one."

The only guidance there is that if consultation is not defined and specified in a Bill, nothing much happens.

In the Crawley case of Rollo *v.* Minister of Town and Country Planning in 1947, which concerns the development at the Crawley Three Bridges area, the New Towns Act, 1946 section 1(1) required

> "If the Minister . . . is satisfied, after consultation with any local authorities who appear to him to be concerned, that it is expedient in the national interest that any area of land should be developed as a new town by a corporation established under this Act, he may make an order designating that area as the site of the proposed new town."

That is what has brought by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) to the House tonight.

The plaintiffs took objection to the process called consultation. The local authorities were informed at the meeting of the general nature of the proposal—the area and size of the proposed town, and what the Minister intended to bring about—discussion was invited, some questions were put by the authorities' representatives and answered by the Minister and his assistants, and a minute was prepared and a press notice issued stating what had

happened. A second meeting was held at the local authorities' request to explain the Minister's considerations in arriving at the boundaries of the area. Objections were raised that that was not consultation, and that they had been told what had to happen. They said that they were allowed to express their views, the Minister remained silent and did not discuss anything very much, and that that was not consultation. The Master of the Rolls, Lord Greene, said that the Minister did not need to complete his consultation with local authorities before he published the draft order. In other words, the Minister could listen to comments, then publish the draft order an further talks could be held thereafter. That is an unsatisfactory form of consultation even though it was written into the Act, which it had not been in the earlier case.

The Master of the Rolls said:

"It is to be observed also that under the subsection the ultimate judge of what is or is not in the national interest is the Minister."

1.15 am

That decision was recently echoed in one prominent case. It is not the local authorities or the courts, but the Minister who is responsible to Parliament if he administers the Act badly and reaches conclusions open to criticism as not being in the national interest. That is a ministerial responsibility rather than one upon the shoulders of a local authority. The Master of the Rolls continued:

"The point immediately arises whether that interview alone could be a consultation within the meaning of the subsection, having regard to the fact that the Bill had not, at that stage, become an Act."

I do not think that that question requires an answer, nor do I see any necessity for going into the question whether, assuming nothing else had happened, that could be described as a consultation contemplated by the subsection.

Lord Justice Bucknill said:

"A certain amount has been said as to what consultation means. In my view, as junior counsel for the Minister said, it means that, on the one side, the Minister must supply sufficient information to the local authority to enable them to tender advice, and, on the other hand, a sufficient opportunity must be given to the local authority to tender that advice."

A rather difficult question arises whether the discussion was a consultation within the meaning of section 1, and he said that it was.

That underlines the necessity, if consultation is to mean anything, for its meaning to be laid down specifically in the Act of Parliament—especially the rather sensible suggestion of Lord Justice Bucknill that it should mean on the one hand that the Minister supplies sufficient information to the local authority to enable it to tender advice, and on the other a sufficient opportunity for it to do so.

If we apply that to a water authority, it must give all the information and allow the other party—the district or county council—the right to tender its advice. As the Bill stands, there is no such requirement. There is no definition in the relevant section; it has been laid down by the House of Lords. In other words, there is no protection. The Government have made no real concessions, they have used the hollow phrase, "You can consult", which is absolutely meaningless. It is deceptive in that it is intended to convey that the Government are conceding something that is of significance or importance. It is a hollow exercise.

I know that a number of parliamentary private secretaries and others will go into the Lobby with the Government in the belief that a concession has been made——

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): It is a conviction.

Mr. Lawrence: It may be a conviction that drives a few such people through the Lobby on a free vote at 1.20 am, but some are misled into thinking that a substantial, important concession has been made. That is quite untrue —there are no concessions. Until there are, it cannot seriously be expected that those of us who think that this is a rotten Bill, but who are nevertheless obliged to support it, should do so without the faintest twinkle of any concession being made.

For that reason, I invite my hon. Friends to vote against amendment No. 7 and oblige the Government to take away the definition section, include a definition of consultation and then return so that something useful will have been achieved.

Mr. Michael Brown: I would not go all the way along the road of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). If the definition of a local authority were not so tightly drawn, the Government's case would be stronger. That tight definition means the council of a county or district, of a London borough or the Common Council of the City of London. Under the heading of "local authority", I would have liked to have been included parish and town councils.

When a major item of planning is being undertaken by a district council, it is normal for that council — remembering that a district council often covers an area as large as that covered by a district health authority—to consult the parish or town council. We now have, as a result of the last local government reorganisation, a number of town councils which cover significant populations. It is right, therefore, that such councils should be asked to give a view on the type of issue that we are discussing.

I object to the subsection in its present form, not because the Government are seeking to do anything underhand — they have introduced what they have described as a concession, though I do not want to trespass on a debate we shall have on a later amendment—but because of the definition given to the expression "local authority." Town and parish councils could have an important role in offering advice to district health authorities.

There are in my constituency seven or eight town councils, one of which, Immingham, represents a population of about 10,000. I would have thought that the view of a body of that size should be sought in a matter of this kind. Indeed, it would be reprehensible if a major planning decision were taken in the Cleethorpes borough council area without Immingham town council being consulted.

I mention Immingham town council in particular because it covers a large area of the industrial part of my constituency. That contains many chemical factories, and effluent, particularly into water and sewerage pipes, from which occupies much of the concern of that council. If Immingham town council discovers that we have legislated to allow for consultation with local authorities along the lines in this measure, the mayor of Immingham

[Mr. Michael Brown]

will write to me asking, "Why has 'local authority' been defined in such a narrow way as not to include this town council?" The mayor and town clerk there will be extremely angry over that.

Immingham town council often finds itself in a peculiar position in relation to Cleethorpes borough council. Although the town council represents a small area of the borough geographically, it represents a large population. Its views often carry great weight with the borough council, and on occasions the borough has planned to take decisions but, after consulting the town council, has reversed its decision. If that can happen with local authorities, surely it is right and proper that it should happen with district health authorities. I do not want to nit-pick on the local authority definition, but it is an important point which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will consider.

I notice that the definition does not appear to include any of the Scottish regional councils, and I wonder why that should be. If the Bill were to become an Act, it would apply to Scotland, and I should be interested to know from my hon. Friend why the definition of "local authority" does not include the regional councils in Scotland.

Mr. Hickmet: Amendment No. 4, taken with amendment No. 7, asks the House to delete the definition section in clause 1(7) and to substitute a new subsection which would be the new definition or interpretation section.

I do not wish to delay the House unnecessarily, but when my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) referred to the lack of definition of the word "consult" or "consultation" in the new subsection (7), he made a telling point. My constituents are concerned because they would like to consult the appropriate authority about the contents of the water supply and to question whether it is fluoridated. They have one of the highest levels of nitrates in their water supply. Therefore, consultation about a proposal by a health authority to inject fluoride into the water concerns my constituents. Nobody has ever consulted them about the nitrate level in their water, which is so much higher than that recommended by the European Commission. They already have experience of the lack of consultation before additives are artificially injected into the water.

If the new subsection is to mean anything, and is to provide any protection to people who find themselves in the position of my constituents, some definition of "consultation" must be set out and defined. The amendment says:

"the health authority shall consult"

about their proposals.

With whom is it to consult? Is it to be with the local authority? What form will the consultation take? Is it to inform the local authority of the proposal when it was the body that took the decision? Suppose the local authority shows opposition to the consultative process. It matters not.

If the word "consultation" were to be defined, it would be open to those aggrieved by the consultative process to say that consultations had been held with the district health authority but that they were a waste of time because the district health authority had allowed the statutory water undertaker to put fluoride into the water. If the word "consultation" were included in the definition section, those who are concerned about the addition of fluoride to the water would be armed with a legal redress. It may be —my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton will, I hope, assist me here—that the matter could go to the Divisional court. A district health authority proposal which ignored the consultative process might be the subject of judicial review. It would be the only weapon that an individual would have with which to fight district health authorities and local authorities.

1.30 am

District health authorities will consult only the local authorities. The district health authority in my constituency is served by hard-working and worthy people, but most of my constituents do not know who they are. The definition section does no define the word "proposal". Subsection (2) of the new clause refers to a period of six months before the implementation of a proposal by a district health authority. If the word "proposal" is not defined, a district health authority could make a decision which it would ask the statutory water undertaker to implement. That decision could disregard entirely the consultative process.

If the words "consultation" and "proposal" are not defined, the new clause could be construed as a sop, because my constituents, and others, would be provided with no redress. My constituents would be most anxious to participate in the consultative process because the level of nitrates in the water is the highest in the country. It is in breach of all of the European Commission recommendations. Therefore, the addition of fluoride would cause grave concern. However, it appears that the Government do not care. If they did, the word "consultation" would be included in the definition section. Let the Government take the definition section, apply their minds to the concessions which they made in another place and define what they mean. If as a result the Bill should be delayed, the Government would have brought that on themselves.

Mr. Hayoe: My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) referred to the definition of "local authority" and particularly to the position of parish and town councils. If they feel strongly about fluoridation, they will be able to make representations to the health authority in response to the publication of proposals in the local press. He also referred to the fact that there was no definition of "local authority" for Scotland. Such a provision is not needed for Scotland as the decision there will rest with water authorities which are the elected regional and island councils.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) spoke at some length about consultation. I imagine that they made their speeches on the basis that amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 7 would be selected. It was not. Nevertheless, they made their speeches.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 116, Noes 12.

Division No. 302] **[1.36 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*

Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Bruinvels, Peter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Golding, John
Ground, Patrick
Hickmet, Richard
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ivan Lawrence and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly agreed to.

New Clause

CONTINUITY OF EXISTING FLUORIDATION SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 5, after clause 2, insert the following new clause—

" .(1) Where, in pursuance of arrangements entered into by a statutory water undertaker before 20th December 1984—

(a) a scheme for increasing the fluoride content of water supplied by the undertaker in any part of England and Wales was in operation immediately before that date; or

(b) work had been begun by the undertaker, before that date, for the purpose of enabling such a scheme to be brought into operation;

the undertaker may, while the conditions mentioned in subsection (2) below are satisfied, operate the scheme.

(2) The conditions are that the arrangements under which the scheme operates require—

(a) fluoridation to be effected only by the addition of one or more of the compounds of fluorine mentioned in section 1(4) of this Act; and

(b) the concentration of fluoride in the water supplied to consumers to be maintained, so far as is reasonably practicable, at one milligram per litre.

(3) Where a statutory water undertaker is operating a fluoridation scheme by virtue of this section—

(a) subsection (6) of section 1 of this Act shall apply in relation to the scheme as it applies in relation to any scheme operated in exercise of the power conferred by that section;

(b) the scheme shall cease to have effect upon the appropriate authority giving to the undertaker reasonable notice of the authority's desire to terminate it; and

(c) the arrangements under which the scheme is operated may be varied to take account of any amendment of section 1(4) of this Act made under section 2."

Read a Second time.

1.45 am

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to move amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 3, leave out '20th December 1984' and insert '29th June 1983'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take the following amendments to the proposed Lords amendment: (b), in line 3, leave out '20th December 1984' and insert '6th December 1983'.

(c), in line 6, leave out from 'date' to end of line 9.

(d), in line 26, leave out

'cease to have effect upon the appropriate authority giving to the undertaker reasonable notice'

and insert

'cease operation immediately upon the undertaker receiving in writing notice from the appropriate authority'.

Mr. Lawrence: The new clause was introduced by the Government to buy off—once again—the anxieties of the water authorities, which were worried that if they were to give people an opportunity to decide whether they should have fluoridation processes foisted upon them that would cost money. They asked the Government to exempt schemes that had already begun. The Government, who are in enough trouble with water authorities, and under pressure from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page), have expanded the evil of the Bill—once again—against the interests of the consumers and the wishes of the House.

The new clause provides that if a scheme is in existence before the Bill becomes law, the people will have no right to express their view. Many will think that that is disgraceful. Why should those who are opposed to fluoridation, but have already had to suffer it, although it was unlawful, as the judge in the Court of Session in Scotland found—as he was interpreting precisely the same law as that which applied in the rest of the United Kingdom fluoridation must have been unlawful in the rest of the United Kingdom—be further deprived of the concession that is claimed to have been given in the Bill? Why will they not have the right to have the fact that

[Mr. Lawrence]

fluoridation is to be foisted on them publicised and not have the right to make their views known? Where is the justice in making those who are already at a disadvantage suffer even further disadvantage?

I ask the House to vote against the Lords amendment, and, if we are not successful, at least to vote for my amendments, the purposes of which, I will now enlighten the House, are as follows.

The date of 20 December 1984, which is laid down as the magic date, after which there shall be publicity and consultation if the fluoridation process has begun, but before which there need not be, is the date on which this Bill was introduced. After all, we are not making some wonderful concession to the British people. We are giving them the right to decide whether to have this substance, this corrosive poison—drip, drip, drip—flushed down their throats for the rest of their lives.

I ask the House to say that the right to have the issue publicised and the right to be consulted should not begin long after everyone knew that it was against the law. That is unfair to all the consumers, it puts a premium on wrong doing and it makes a further mockery of consultation. There is no reason, and never was, for thinking that it was lawful to fluoridate the water. The making of water wholesome obviously had nothing to do with mass medication. The only reason why it was allowed to continue was that the anti-fluoridation people simply did not have the money to test the matter in court. When it was eventually tested, it was found to be what everyone knew it to be—unlawful.

This may be considered too harsh a judgment, but everybody must have known that it was unlawful after Lord Jauncey's judgment on 29 June, so in the amendment I recommend that the House accepts that the right to have the matter publicised, and the right to consult, should extend to any situation where the fluoridation process began before, not after Lord Jauncey made his judgment. I suppose that if one wants to be kind to the water authorities one could say that they did not know positively until this ruling.

People may well have been labouring under the misapprehension that if it was unlawful in Scotland it was not unlawful in England, but they could no longer take this view after my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his announcement on 6 December 1983. I have therefore taken 6 December 1983 as the second alternative date, the third alternative stage at which this House, depending on whether it is in a benign mood, shall give the people of this country a greater right to have publicity and to be consulted before they have this substance flushed down their throats, merely because the poor water authorities have already begun spending money on the process. If they have spent money on it, knowing or suspecting that it was unlawful, why should the public suffer?

The fourth amendment is intended to firm up a particularly flabby piece of deception—for that is what it is—in this whole pretence that the public are deriving some benefit from publicity and consultation.

The flabby paragraph states:

"the scheme shall cease to have effect upon the appropriate authority giving to the undertaker reasonable notice of the authority's desire to terminate it".

That is no restriction. Notice can be given at some time, and some time thereafter the fluoridators might have to stop fluoridating. The provision is vague and wide. Fluoridating could continue for a few more months, or even for a few more years. A few more people could die or develop ailments which scientists of international repute have said are the result of fluoridation.

That is not on. It should not be acceptable to a responsible House of Commons. That is why I suggest that the House firms up that provision and states that the operation should cease immediately the water undertaker receives notice in writing from the appropriate authority. As soon as the authority receives the letter saying that fluoridation must stop, it must stop. In this way, we could not only achieve freedom, but could stop the pain and suffering which comes long after the teeth are all gone.

I do not want to detain the House a moment longer than is necessary, but it is clear that the water authorities should not deprive the people of the right to be consulted just because they have begun to operate their plans, knowing them to be unlawful. The right not to have water fluoridated should begin from the moment that the undertaker serves notice.

Mr. Whitney: I urge the House to reject the amendments to the Lords amendment. The purpose of the Bill is to provide specific powers for fluoridation. It would make no sense to approve the two amendments relating to the dates which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) proposes. It would not make sense to impose a burden on health and water authorities to renegotiate existing schemes which are not currently illegal and whose legality can be in no doubt under the terms of the Bill. It will remain open both to health and water authorities to reconsider existing schemes in accordance with contractural arrangements.

One of my hon. and learned Friend's amendments would restrict the definition of an existing scheme to one which was in operation in December 1984 rather than to one which is in operation or on which work has been done with a view to operating a scheme. The amendment is against the spirit of the Bill and should be rejected.

Amendment *(d)* would impose on water authorities a requirement to cease fluoridating water immediately on receipt of written notice from a health authority. The boundaries of water authorities and health authorities are by no means coterminous. Under the amendment the fluoridation of several health authority areas might have to cease because one authority wished to terminate its scheme, at least until such time as other arrangements could be made.

2 am

I recognise the concern of some hon. Members that the urgent termination of all schemes might at some stage be required, but subsection (6) of the new clause introduced by Lords amendment No. 6 provides the most effective means of dealing with that highly unlikely event as it provides power for the Secretary of State to waive consultation requirements for terminating schemes. The amendment now under consideration would therefore not be required in that event and would apply only if one health authority wished to terminate fluoridation on policy grounds. I do not believe that the wishes of other health authorities should be overridden buy such a change, and I urge the House to resist the amendment.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I do not wish to detain the House long, but my name appears as a supporter of the amendments introduced by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). I wish to draw attention to amendment *(d)*. It gives me no pleasure to keep Ministers out of their beds, but my colleagues and I realise that in doing so we are salving the consciences of those who feel duty bound to support the Government today, having told their constituents in the past that they opposed mass medication. Now they will at least be able to tell their constituents that some of their colleagues were able to hold the banner aloft.

The most important point in relation to amendment (d) is that it is the duty of Parliament to be specific in the way in which it draws up legislation. Increasingly, legislation enacted by Parliament has needed to be tested in the courts to such an extent that in many respects the courts have become the legislators. That is absolutely wrong. We should ensure that we draft the laws of the land in such a way that ordinary men and women can understand them or, if that is not possible, so that the courts understand them clearly and do not have to act as substitutes for us as legislators.

In my view, the Lords amendment is unsatisfactory because there is no definition of "reasonable notice". At the very least, those who would impose this mass medication on our people should make it possible for a health authority which decides that it is undesirable to have this substance artificially introduced into the water supply and that it should be removed to have that change of heart carried out at the earliest possible moment. I therefore strongly commend the amendment so ably introduced by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton because it does not require the courts to interpret the matter but provides clear wording. It uses the word "immediately", and there can be no doubt about what that means.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Minister about boundaries not being coterminous. That is a very fair point, but I hope that he will agree that it is also fair to point out that if a regional authority currently providing mass medication decides that it has seen the light it will be because compelling evidence has been presented to it that the substance constitutes a danger to the population. It is surely right and proper that the benefit of that should be given to all the health authorities covered by the statutory undertaker and that it should be the prerogative of the one who would decide, "Nay, we shall not have this substance added to the water" to have the constitution of the water supply immediately decided. Thereafter, of course, it will be open to other health authorities to argue the case if they wish to have the poison reintroduced into the water supply.

These are fundamental matters of principle. It would be wholly wrong to give an easy passage to a measure which I know many of my hon. Friends oppose utterly. I look forward to them all buying me a drink afterwards for my having held the banner high on their behalf.

Mr. Michael Brown: This is the most important of the Lords amendments. That fact is reflected by the increased attendance in the House. It is a credit to many hon. Members that they have come into the Chamber so late.

Lords amendment No. 5 gives soft passage to what Lord Jauncey ruled illegal. The health authority was in breach of the law, so the Government introduced legislation in response to Lord Jauncey's judgment. The Lords amendment breaches constitutional practice by which we take notice of legal judgments. The parliamentary process of law-making is acknowledged to be entirely separate from the judicial process. It is a dangerous procedent for the Government to promote legislation simply because they do not like a judgment.

I regret that the Bill has been introduced as it is designed to bail out health authorities that made decisions that were ruled illegal. We are saying that every time the Government or one of their agencies is on the wrong side of the law, the Government will rush to the House, give us a free vote—of which we are taking advantage—but try to persuade us to bail them out. That is not right. If we are to give the Government the benefit of the doubt when it comes to our attitude about their proposals for consultation for possible future schemes, why should we not give the same opportunity for a rethink on consultation with people who have had the misfortune to have fluoride added to their water before it was rendered illegal? Why should they not have the opportunity of some form of consultation? They had the misfortune to live in an area where the local health authority introduced fluoride into the public water supply in the absence of public consultation and it is being sought to give them carte blanche to continue that activity without consulting the local people, who have had to suffer the misfortune of an act of illegality. It is only right that an amendment should be introduced to rectify the deficiencies of the Lords amendment.

It is unfortunate that when the Question is put many of my hon. Friends will forget that they put their signature to various early-day motions and will support the Government. That applies to some of my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. I have copies of the letters that they wrote to their constituents on this matter. I exclude my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who has always taken an honourable and strict view of the issue, but I cannot exclude his predecessor.

I know that many of my hon. Friends will support the Government with a heavy heart when the Division takes place. I understand why that is so, but they have not changed their minds overnight. It has not suddenly dawned on them that fluoridation is right. Surely they have a duty to think back to their attitude before the judgment of Lord Jauncey. The view that some of my hon. Friends and I are expressing is the view that many others were expressing. The House will be setting a dangerous precedent by legalising an illegality.

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment to the Lords amendment.

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (d) proposed to the Lords amendment, in line 26, leave out

'cease to have effect upon the appropriate authority giving to the undertaker reasonable notice'

and insert

'cease operation immediately upon the undertaker receiving in writing notice from the appropriate authority'. — *[Mr. Lawrence.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the proposed Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 12, Noes 116.

Division No. 303] **[2.13 pm**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Golding, John
Ground, Patrick
Hickmet, Richard
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Skinner, Dennis
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.

New Clause

PUBLICITY AND CONSULTATION

Lords amendment: No. 6, insert the following new clause:

"(1) This section applies where a health authority propose—

(a) to make or withdraw an application; or

(b) to terminate a scheme which may be operated by virtue of section 3 of this Act (a "preserved scheme").

(2) At least three months before implementing their proposal, the health authority shall—

(a) publish details of the proposal in one or more newspapers circulating within the area affected by the proposal; and

(b) in the case of an authority in England and Wales, give notice of the proposal to every local authority whose area falls wholly or partly within the area affected by the proposal.

(3) Before implementing the proposal the health authority shall consult each of the local authorities (if any) to whom they are required by subsection (2)*(b)* above to give notice of the proposal.

(4) The health authority shall, not earlier than seven days after publishing details of the proposal in the manner required by subsection (2)*(a)* above, republish them in that manner.

(5) Where a health authority have complied with this section in relation to the proposal they shall, in determining whether or not to proceed, have such regard as they consider appropriate—

(a) to any representations which have been made to them with respect to it; and

(b) to any consultations held under subsection (3) above.

(6) The Secretary of State may direct that this section shall not apply in relation to any proposal of a health authority to withdraw an application or to terminate a preserved scheme.

(7) Where, at any meeting of a health authority, consideration is given to the question whether the authority should make or withdraw an application or terminate a preserved scheme, section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (which would have allowed the authority to exclude the public from the meeting in certain circumstances) shall not apply to any proceedings on that question."

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, in subsection (2), leave out 'three months' and insert 'six months'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments to the Lords amendment:

In subsection (2)*(a)*, leave out 'one or more newspapers' and insert

'each newspaper registered at the Post Office as a newspaper'.

In subsection (2)*(b)*, after 'authority', insert 'and Community Health Council'.

Leave out subsection (5).

In subsection (5), leave out 'as they consider appropriate'.

In subsection (5), leave out 'they consider appropriate' and insert

'is reasonable in all the circumstances'.

In subsection (5), leave out

'have such regard as they consider appropriate'

and insert

'give effect to the clearly expressed majority of opinion, if any, arising from regard'.

Leave out subsection (6).

Mr. Lawrence: The amendment goes to the root of the question whether the consultation process has any meaning, and what is meant by "publicity".

I am afraid that neither the water authorities nor the Government want to publicise fluoridation schemes because they know that the people do not want them, there

will be a reaction, discussion and objections, hon. Members will receive letters about it, Colonel Blunt will write, and that that hassle can be avoided if there is no publicity. Pretence that publicity is an issue towards which the Government, water authorities and health authorities are strongly inclined is bogus.

Clearly publicity is not wanted because the authorities wish to go ahead with fluoridation whatever the views of the people. A couple of years ago the National Anti-fluoridation Campaign commissioned the British Market Research Bureau Limited to carry out a public opinion poll. To the question, "Do you think people should be allowed to choose whether or not they and their children will have more fluoride in the water they drink?" sixty-seven per cent. said "Yes", 22 per cent. said "No", and 11 per cent. said "Don't know". That is as clear as a public opinion poll can be. The overwhelming majority do not want fluoride in their water; they want to choose.

When the Government, water authorities or health authorities are faced with such a statistic, they do not want to publicise that that is what most of the public is thinking. They want the antithesis of publicity. That is why the contents of the Bill are a pretence at publicity, and why I have tabled the amendment.

It is no good if the time of publicity is so short that nobody can object. In July and August, in particular, people go on holiday, and if there are only three months for the publicity to take effect we know what will happen during those months—the same as happened when the closure of our grammar schools was publicised. Publicity will be given so late that meetings cannot be organised in time to lobby water authorities. We have seen it all before. It is old hat. The shorter the period for publicity, the less hassle.

To protect the interests of those who do not want this evil substance to be repeatedly flushed down their throats, the Government, if they are genuine about the need for publicity, will give a reasonable period for that publicity. Therefore, the amendment extends the period from three to six months. That seems reasonable and sensible, and I am sure it will have the support of my colleagues.

The next feeble requirement regarding publicity is that one or more newpapers should carry the advertisement. That looks good if one does not know what it means. The Government can get away with advertising in a newspaper that no one reads because the circulation is so small. A newspaper is not defined and it need not be any number of newspapers so that everyone in the area can see it. Only the minimum number of people need be given the opportunity to see the publicity. That is not good enough.

If publicity means what the Government should mean, people should know in advance whether there are proposals to fluoridate. Therefore, advertisements should be circulated in every newspaper operating in an area. If that is too wide a definition, I suggest that it should be circulated in each newspaper registered at the post office. That would be a bona fide newspaper — one which people buy or which people receive in ever larger numbers as a give-away. Every proper newspaper should carry publicity of the proposals. That is what the people expect. They do not expect the advertisement to be hidden in a newspaper with the least possible circulation—a pokey advertisement on a page that no one reads.

The advertisement should be published not only in the local authority area, but in the whole of the area of the community health council. That might mean publicity in a few more newspapers, but if the object of the exercise is as the Government pretend, they should prove to the House that they mean what they say. There is no reason why such publicity should not be given.

The integrity of the Government is at stake. They boast that plans will be well publicised and that they will not sneak up secretly when people are not watching. They say that the opportunity will be given to consult and object. That must mean that the maximum number of responsible, acceptable and respectable newspapers in a certain area will publicise the plans in sufficient time to allow representations to be made.

Secondly, there is the question of consultation. I shall not repeat the earlier debate, although there is a great deal to be said. In essence, the proposals for consultation are absolutely meaningless. They are hollow and have no effect. The Lords amendment has no teeth. If there is no need to act upon the views of the people, that is undemocratic. Water authorities do not have to act on the result of the consultation because the new clause provides:

"Where a health authority have complied with this section in relation to the proposal they shall, in determining whether or not to proceed, have such regard as they consider appropriate—

(*a*) to any representations which have been made. . .

(*b*) to any consultations which have been held."

Has there ever been a more feeble provision in any Bill requiring action by an authority respecting the wishes of a democracy? It is hopeless, a pretence and shallow. It is conning the people into believing that there will be some great protection as a result of the Bill. It cons hon. Members. In the early stages of the Bill they asked for the right to be consulted, and the Government said, "Do not bother to read the Bill; we will introduce a consulting measure and make a great concession to the anti-fluoridators." To say,

"in determining whether or not to proceed, have such regard as they consider appropriate"

is a pitiful form of words, apart from being a split infinitive. This is the third gross grammatical error in the Bill. It shows that the measure has not been properly examined. It is a bit of rubbish, a pretence at regularising the position with talk of concessions on publicity and consultation. Something should be done because the phrase "as they consider appropriate" means nothing. It is zero, nil, zilch. It means "We are the bosses. We tell you. That is what you will have."

To strengthen the provision and give it some teeth—if only false teeth — I suggest that we remove the subjective test "as they consider appropriate" and substitute the objective test,

"is reasonable in all the circumstances."

The provision would then read:

"Where a health authority have complied with this section in relation to the proposal they shall, in determining whether or not to proceed, have such regard as is reasonable in all the circumstances . . . to any representations which have been made".

That would not solve the problem, but it would remove the deception from the clause because it would provide an obligation which could be tested in the courts. The phrase

"reasonable in all the circumstances"

is a well known legal test. A court could be asked whether the objections were substantial enough. If, as in the west midlands area, practically every county council, district council, some community health councils and nearly all parish councils say that they do not want it, if public

[Mr. Lawrence]

opinion polls such as the Leicestershire one say no, and if there are positive expressions of opinion objecting, all of that can be tested.

A petition has reached me today from the people of Winchester to the Winchester health authority. I have not had an opportunity to consult my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr Browne), who supports us in this matter, but the petition contains more than 1,000 signatures I now hand it to the Minister, who I trust will respond appropriately. Over 1,000 people in Winchester say it they do not want this law. We should pay attention to what the people want. While the clause remains subjective, using the words "as they consider appropriate," it is a sham.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. and learned Gentleman has really answered my question. I wondered whether there was a judicial interpretation of the phrase that he seeks to substitute and whether the body concerned, if it was faced with the volume of protest that he suggests exists in the west midlands, would have discretion to take a decision against that volume of protest.

Mr. Lawrence: I am afraid so. We have tried throughout the proceedings on the Bill to get the Government to accept that if a district, community or community health council said that it did not want fluoridisation, then it should not have it. Failing that, we are, by such amendments as this, saying that the test should be one of reasonableness. One could go to the courts and say that a decision is unreasonable. My phraseology—that the provision should be reasonable in all the circumstances—is one from which the aggrieved people of Winchester, for example, could say that the provision of the Act says:

> "Where a health authority have complied with this section . . . they shall, in determining whether or not to proceed, have such regard as is reasonable in all the circumstances"

and the court could rule. At least they would have something that is not a pretence to sustain them.

The amendment means, for example, that it would not be reasonable to fluoridate where every local authority, the majority of local authorities, or even a significant number of the local authorities were against it. It would not be reasonable to fluoridate where the costs would be great, where the fluoride output from the factories was so high that people's intake of fluoride was great anyway, or in any area where the incidence of dental caries is particularly low. The British people would understand those tests of reasonableness, and I ask the House to support them tonight by voting for my amendment.

Mr. Best: I welcome the insertion of a consultation clause into the Bill, and I congratulate the Government on having inserted it. It does not go far enough, because it still does not give expression to the individual will or to the majority of opinion clearly expressed in a particular area. Nevertheless, it is better to have some consultation than to have none, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will accept my congratulations to the Government.

However, there is no need for consultation in many, if not all, areas that receive artificially fluoridated water. We know the clearly expressed opinion of the people living in those areas. Every form of survey that has been conducted, some more efficacious than others I accept, shows loud and clear the message that people do not want fluoride added artificially to their water supply.

In my constituency, not only is the local authority against fluoridation, although it would be consulted under this provision, — we know the answer there — but the community health council. Despite that, fluoridation continues on Ynys Môn. How would the Government get through their business if they said on the Whip list, or to the pay-roll vote, that such Members could vote "as they consider appropriate". I suspect that it would not be regarded as a particularly effective way of getting Government business through the House. However, through the Lords amendment, there will be a requirement that the health authority should do no more than have regard to representations "as they consider appropriate." That is why I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for having selected my amendments. It ought not to be the health authority which has to pay regard, as it considers appropriate, to expressions of opinion. The individual consumer ought to be asked whether he or she considers it appropriate to have to drink fluoridated water.

2.45 am

It has already been said that if public opinion is overwhelmingly against fluoridation a health authority will bow to that expression of opinion. That is a forlorn hope. Views against fluoridation have been clearly expressed in areas where the water is fluoridated, yet fluoridation continues. Gwynedd health authority continues to fluoridate Anglesey's water supplies, yet every opinion poll and every locally elected body is against it. That shows how much health authorities disregard public opinion. Even if provision were to be made for consultation, I suspect that health authorities would continue to disregard publicly expressed views.

One of my amendments therefore deletes the words "as they consider appropriate". Another amendment seeks to delete the words

> "have such regard as they consider appropriate"

and to insert

> "give effect to the clearly expressed majority of opinion, if any, arising from regard"

to those representations. That might have some effect. If a health authority were required to act upon a view that had been clearly expressed by the people in its area, consultation might work, but there is a lacuna in the clause which causes me grave concern. As drafted, it would enable consultation to take place when a new scheme is proposed and also when a health authority proposes to terminate a scheme. However, no provision is made for consultation in those areas which are already receiving artificially fluoridated water. Those areas which are not fluoridated will benefit from the consultation process, as will those areas where the health authority seeks to terminate fluoridation, but that is small cheer for those areas whose water supplies are fluoridated. They will continue to be fluoridated. They will not be consulted.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): Can my hon. Friend suggest what form of consultation there should be in those areas which are naturally highly fluoridated? Those who live in areas where the water supply is naturally highly fluoridated may not wish to receive it. Surely they, too, ought to be consulted about whether or not the fluoride that occurs naturally in their water supply should be reduced.

Mr. Best: There is little substance in my hon. Friend's point. One can do little about what occurs naturally. We are debating the artificial introduction of fluoride into the water supply and we are considering whether the artificial fluoridation of that supply should continue.

Mr. David Atkinson: If my hon. Friend is suggesting that it is dangerous for those receiving water which is artificially fluoridated, he must also be saying that it is dangerous for those receiving water which is naturally fluoridated. Surely, therefore, he would wish the same provision to apply to those areas.

Mr. Best: No. We are debating amendments to a Bill which will give power to health authorities to introduce a noxious substance into the water supply — *[Interruption]*. It is a poison. If noxious substance is not an adequate description, perhaps another can be found. We are debating whether fluoride should be introduced into water supplies which do not have the fluoride poison in them and whether people should have a say on that.

The consultation clause enables people to have a say, but it gives no consolation to my constituents or to the people in other areas which already have fluoride added artificially to the water supplies. Consultation with them will not be required after the passage of this Bill into law. That is a serious matter which is made more serious by the fact that this is a clause de novo. Consultation has not been required of health authorities in the past when they applied to a statutory water undertaker to introduce fluoride.

People who already receive fluoride under existing schemes will never have had the opportunity of consultation and they will not be offered a facility for consultation under the Bill. I like to think charitably that that was an oversight by the Government. I believe the Government were exercising good will in introducing a consultation clause. Therefore, it is an oversight that an opportunity for consultation will not be given to people who already have fluoride added artificially to the water supply.

I want my constituents to have the right under the Bill to say whether they want fluoridation to continue and for the health authority to have regard to their wishes. Whether they have regard to it as they consider appropriate is a matter for debate. In any event, surely my constituents must have the right to express their view in such a way that it will be taken note of, if nothing more. At present there is no facility for that.

Subsection (6) of the proposed new clause says:

> The Secretary of State may direct that this section shall not apply in relation to any proposal of a health authority to withdraw an application or to terminate a preserved scheme.

If I were a pro-fluoridationist I would be upset about that, because it does not give people the right to say that they want to keep fluoridation. Under that provision the Secretary of State will be able to say, "Do away with consultation." If a health authority proposes that fluoride should be removed from the water supply, the pro-fluoridation lobby may have no say. I do not know whether the Government introduced that provision in an over-zealous manner to try to buy off the anti-fluoride vote, but, if I were in favour of mass medication by means of fluoridation, I would be upset at the inclusion of that provision in legislation.

Consultation is a good concept but it is meaningless unless it has some bite. The consultation proposed in the Bill, sadly, has no bite, but even more seriously it has no relevance to people like my constituents, who already labour under artificial fluoridation and have clearly expressed their opposition to it at every opportunity given to them. Under the Bill they will still have no right to be consulted.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) for his welcome to the clause covered by Lords amendment No. 6. I contrast his kindly comment, although I understand that he would like the clause to go rather further, with the rather sour comments of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

Before commenting on some of the amendments, I should say that the new clause results from Government commitments made on Report by my predecessor and the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State that the Bill should place upon health authorities and boards a statutory obligation to undertake general public consultation before deciding to apply to a statutory water undertaker for fluoridation, and that the Bill should require health authorities to discuss these matters in public.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton was unduly pessimistic, and in much of his comment discounted many of the public bodies concerned in this process. His amendment *(c)* suggests that the consultation period should be extended from three to six months. That is rather unreasonable. Three months is sufficient to carry out a reasonable consultation process. At times, we have managed to hold general elections within three weeks, and certainly more normally within six weeks. This is allowing double that time.

My hon. and learned Friend also suggested that the information should be given in each newspaper registered at the Post Office as a newspaper. That would extend the field in a most remarkable fashion, and it would mean that one would have to advertise fluoridation proposals in papers like *The Sporting Life* and various religious newspapers. That is obviously absurd and, given the public interest in matters of this kind and the various pressure groups, these proposals will not be carried through in the still of the night with no one knowing. They will be the subject of considerable public debate, and it is right and proper that should be so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn suggested that the words, "as they consider appropriate" should be deleted from subsection (5) of the new clause. If he reads it carefully, he will see that that would render the new clause meaningless, and the state that his amendment would leave it in would be even worse, by his own judgment, than it is at the moment. The new clause carries through the commitments given by my predecessor and our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at that time, and I commend it to the House. I hope that the House will resist the various amendments to the proposed Lords amendment.

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (h) proposed to the Lords amendment, in line 23, leave out 'they consider appropriate' and insert 'is reasonable in all the circumstances'.—*[Mr. Lawrence.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 10, Noes 109.

Division No. 304] **[2.59 am**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Ground, Patrick
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Golding and
Mr. Ivan Lawrence.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.
Lords amendment No. 6 agreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 7 and 8 agreed to.

Business of the House

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to make a brief announcement about the remaining business for today. The Government intend to proceed with the remaining stages of the Weights and Measures Bill *[Lords]*. Following discussions with the usual channels, we have decided not to proceed with the remaining stages of the Housing Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing Associations Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and the Landlord and Tenant Bill *[Lords]*. They will now be taken on Tuesday, 29 October.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I welcome the statement by the Leader of the House? It is important to preserve the rights of the House of Commons in such matters.

Weights and Measures Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clauses 1 to 22 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 23

REGULATIONS AS TO INFORMATION

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 25, line 25, leave out 'this section' and insert 'section 21 or 22 above'

This corrects a mistake in subsection (1)(*f*).

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is important that the House should be able to satisfy itself that genuine consolidation is intended. I am convinced that this does involve genuine consolidation and that we should agree to it.

Amendment agreed to

Clause 23, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 24 to 99 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedules 1 to 13 agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading) and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, with an amendment.

Football Grounds (Financial Assistance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

3.15 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): First, I offer my congratulations and, I am sure, those of the entire House to the new Minister with responsibility for sport. I am sure that he would have preferred to make his ministerial debut at a better hour, but we wish him well in the two years or so ahead of him. In so doing, sports lovers on both sides of the House should also extend our very best wishes to the Minister's predecessor now that he has gone to the Back Benches to recharge his batteries. I hope that we shall have as cordial a relationship with the new Minister as we had with his predecessor.

This is a serious debate. It concerns the future of our national game, association football, and it concerns literally millions of our fellow countrymen, whether they be Conservatives, Liberals, Social Democrats, Labour supporters or those who do not even vote at all. As most football supporters realise, it would be political suicide for any Government to set out to kill our national game, but at the moment it looks very much as though that game is in jeopardy as a result of Government action.

We can all be critical—I certainly can—of the way in which soccer is organised in this country. It is a product of 19th century Britain. Clubs have grown like Topsy around old-established industries of yesteryear and are desperately hanging on to their former glory. No doubt the football league structure should be rationalised, but to try to do this through the blunt instrument of Government edict would be folly indeed.

As one who has studied the football scene over many years, I have observed a clear breakthrough from the patterns of thinking and attitudes which prevailed hitherto in soccer. A new leadership has emerged in the game determined to rid football of the image that it is still living in the last century. Many of the new leaders are chairmen and senior directors of our leading clubs — Martin Edwards of Manchester United, Irving Scholar of Spurs and John Smith of Liverpool, also chairman of the Sports Council. The new president of the football league, Jack Dunnett, formerly a Member of this House, has also breathed new life and vitality into the game. All of them see a new and exciting concept of what genuine football fans require and expect from their clubs. More important, they have taken positive steps to deliver a new and better environment in which those fans can watch their favourite game, free from the risk of disruption from the small hooligan element.

The evidence is all about us. In the first division, Tottenham Hotspur has recently installed a new 13-camera closed circuit television system, erected additional fences and anti-hooligan roll bars in the visiting supporters' area. Southampton has constructed a police control box at a cost of approximately £25,000 and an additional crowd segregation barrier costing £4,000. Newcastle United has provided additional emergency exits at a cost of approximately £100,000 and further improvements estimated at between £300,000 and £500,000.

I could cite many more top clubs, but the same applies to all the divisions. In the third division, small York City

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has taken considerable measures to provide for safety at its ground, including new exits, turnstiles, staircases, toilet accommodation and fencing costing about £200,000. I could give many more examples. As I am sure that the Minister knows, the sums involved range from a massive £7 million at Bradford, for obvious reasons, to £15,000 at Chelsea and at Middlesbrough. In between, there are clubs such as Doncaster Rovers spending £365,000 and Portsmouth spending £250,000.

Unfortunately for football, the hooligan element in society has attached itself to the game in some numbers, for obvious reasons. The hooligans have decided that in terms of the coverage that they can get out of it, disrupting our national sport is far more productive than hitting old ladies over the head in local shopping precincts. Football has acquired a bad name because of that fringe element. Any Government would be failing in their duty if they did not address themselves to the recent problems in Brussels, Birmingham, Luton and elsewhere, where either because of unruly behaviour or because of inadequate grounds and safety facilities the game has been brought into disrepute. Following the Bradford fire disaster in which 56 people were tragically killed because of the antiquated stand and less than perfect safety precautions, it was right to establish the Popplewell inquiry. However, the Government introduced the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985 in great haste and without prior discussion with interested parties. They have not addressed themselves to the real problems of the hooliganism in football.

The evidence is clear—the Act is not working. What many said at the time has come true. There is no evidence to suggest that the sale or consumption of alcohol at football grounds has been responsible for any large-scale acts of hooliganism. The matches that led the Government into that foolish legislation—Brussels, Birmingham and Luton—were all played in dry grounds when the trouble occurred.

Since the Bill became law, Liverpool football club has reported that a factor of 4·6 people were arrested outside its stadium and that only a factor of 2·6 were arrested in it during the 1984-85 season. After seven games this year, the figures are 2·4 and 0·3 respectively. Those statistics can be repeated for ground after ground. The main problem lies, as we always said, outside football grounds. Thanks to the Act, off licences, supermarkets and pubs around grounds are doing a roaring trade. Football is the poorer financially and I suspect that football fans are merrier as they go through turnstiles than they were before the Act was introduced.

The Football League has estimated that the annual loss of income from alcohol sales will be £1·5 million in addition to the £4 million that accrues to certain clubs from the leasing of executive boxes. The Act is not helping football; rather the opposite is true.

Crystal Palace football club reports that, previously, every match was sold to a sponsor until the Act came into effect, whereupon every sponsor withdrew. It has been a revenue disaster for that club. Manchester United reports a loss of £3,000 per match because of the loss of private box catering, and it anticipates further financial catastrophe next year when the majority of its executive boxes are up for renewal because of dissatisfaction among box holders at their inability to entertain guests acceptably. Chelsea football club reports that only five out of 30 boxes are definitely taken up next season and estimates a loss of £390,000 for that season. Newcastle United has expressed fear at the fact that 18 of its 20 boxes are up for renewal at the end of the season. Aston Villa reports the loss of £100,000 in catering revenue and match sponsorship and fears a possible loss of £300,000 next season due to the loss of more box renewals. Out of 60 boxes, 15 are up for renewal.

During the passage of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Bill, the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), promised me that he would monitor the workings of the Act after some five months into the season. That is not this Minister's responsibility, but the effects of the Act are. The season is already two and a half months old and fair warning has been given to the Government that matters are unacceptable. The entire league is expressing extreme disgust and anger at the futile attempts that the Government have made to deal with the real issue. Corporations and box holders — most of them good Conservative supporters—have withdrawn their support.

I am happy to report that the Minister of State has responded to my invitation to go to Manchester United next week to see for himself the nonsenses that the legislation has brought about. It must be amended. If Mr. Justice Popplewell's final judgment is in line with his interim report—much of which, of course, is acceptable —it will cost clubs a lot of money. Some will simply not be able to conform. It is ironic that the clubs that have long recognised the main arguments of Popplewell are the main sufferers from the legislation. Those who have helped pay for the safety improvements at their grounds are the very clubs that are now being clobbered. As clubs take constructive action to increase police presence and security measures, gate receipts from attendances and corporation revenue are decreasing due to the adverse publicity that the game has attracted. In the first division, gates are down by about 10·5 per cent. on last season. They are down by 9 per cent. over all the divisions.

Mr. Martin Stevens (Fulham): Is it being suggested that the Act is the cause of the fall in gate receipts; and, if so, why?

Mr. Pendry: I was not advancing that argument. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention. He is a keen football supporter and he has been active in helping the game overcome some of its problems. I was saying that, because of the hooligan element, the problems that are associated with the game and the high profile that they assume, there are many people who are not passing through the turnstiles. The Act is not helping clubs overcome some of the problems because gate receipts have declined, but declining attendances are nothing to do with the Act directly.

Manchester City football club has reported to me that it is erecting a perimeter fence at a cost of about £50,000. The local authority is insisting that the club carries out work at the cost of £100,000. The club estimates that it will be out of pocket by tens of thousands of pounds by the end of the season. Tottenham Hotspur projects that it will experience a decrease of £225,000 on last year's takings. It claims that the position will worsen as the season continues.

Football is in a crisis, and for the most part that is not of its own making. Its plight has been made worse by

recent Government action. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will not trot out the old chestnuts that were borne by civil servants before he arrived at the Department. We do not want remedies such as sponsorship of the FA cup, an FA membership scheme where 250,000 players, amateur and professional, would have to be levied, fund-raising matches and further competitions. We all know now that there are too many matches and too many competitions. The Full Members' Cup is very poorly attended, for example. We have heard about video matches of games. Is that really an option at a time of declining gates? I do not know who thinks of these schemes, but they are not produced by genuine football lovers or those who understand the game.

I hope that the Minister will address himself to declining gates, the losses that clubs have suffered following the introduction of the Act, expenditure following the Popplewell report and the expenditure on identity cards, on which the Prime Minister is insisting. These are the areas to which the Minister must address himself. The Government must positively assist football financially in one or two of four respects. They should amend the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act, reduce the pool betting levy by at least 1 per cent., which would yield £5 million to football, make a direct grant to overcome current problems or introduce a pool betting levy board. I know that that is in line with the Prime Minister's philosophy of money being regenerated within an industry. It would be an example of football helping itself, bearing in mind that the football pools provide so much revenue to the Exchequer.

I know that the Minister is aware of these arguments and there is not time at this hour of the morning fully to rehearse them. I hope that he will address himself to the crisis areas. The football world requires and even demands of its new Minister, who is charged with the responsibility of its health and welfare, a positive approach to the problems that are facing the game.

3.29 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for his kind words of congratulation and welcome, and for inspiring this debate on an important topic—safety and sport. Those two words do not feature in the title that he has given to this debate, but I think he will agree that they are our prime concerns. They are the right and true ends of the Government's interests and endeavours and, I hope, of all of us involved in the debate.

I should tell the hon. Gentleman at the outset that the timing of this debate is appropriate if his objective is to lobby the Government. However, it is not appropriate if he hopes to have firm conclusions or decisions from me. I shall explain where we have got to, first giving the House the necessary background, and I shall then look forward to what appear to be the best outcomes for the sport of football from the crises of recent months.

The House is well aware of the crises of recent months and of why those crises attracted the concerned attention of the Prime Minister and the Government. Those events brought British football to its darkest hour. Since then the Government have been in discussion with the football authorities about the measures to be taken to combat the problems of hooliganism and to restore public confidence in the safety of football grounds. I think that everyone will agree that we have acted with speed and with the utmost concern to achieve the necessary changes and improvements in the grounds and in behaviour.

Perhaps I can concentrate principally on the safety issues as they are the main concern of the hon. Gentleman. After the Bradford tragedy, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary took a number of immediate steps. He extended designations under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 to all clubs in divisions 3 and 4 of the Football League. He asked chief fire officers to inspect all sports grounds, and he set up the inquiry under Mr. Justice Popplewell to consider and recommend any further steps that should be taken to improve ground safety and control at sports grounds. Subsequently the Home Secretary extended designations under the Act to the top two divisions of the Rugby League.

In taking these measures, the Government were not unaware of the financial implications for football clubs. But, after Bradford, our primary concern was, and still remains, the safety of spectators. The House will, I am sure, agree that this must be the Government's first priority.

But we recognised the potential problems for football. Thus, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set up a working group, which I now chair, to consider the programme of work for safety improvements and how this might be funded. This working group's considerations have been careful and thorough, and have taken full account of the scale of the need and the problem, and of the resources available.

Our most recent meeting took place last week on 16 October. The group first set out to establish the overall scale and costs of the safety improvement work needed at the football grounds. For this assessment, the Prime Minister asked the chairman of the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, Mr. Tom Wharton, if a survey could be carried out speedily. It is to the credit of Mr. Wharton and of his trust that this survey was not only carried out immediately but with considerable efficiency and thoroughness, and that at no stage did the chairman or trustees seek Government funds for the task. The trust's survey looked at all grounds in the Football League and the Scottish League, including those already designated under the Act, and gave estimates of the work required at each, and, from those assessments, gave an indication of the likely total cost.

The working group found that a very valuable input to its considerations. However, it recognised that the scale and costs of the work could be altered as a result of either the inspections around the country by the chief fire officers or action following Sir Oliver Popplewell's interim report.

In giving the House my assessment of the current position, let me first deal with the Government's concerns about safety on behalf of the whole community. Here I speak on behalf of the Home Secretary, whose primary responsibility this is. We strongly maintain that the Government have responded to the public concern about safety at football grounds in the wake of the Bradford fire. We have had the inspections by the chief fire officers, and the local authorities have now issued certificates to all the newly designated League clubs.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act. Once designated, clubs must apply to their local authorities for a safety certificate; the safety needs and possible improvements are then assessed; but certificates can be issued in advance of those

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improvements being carried out through the imposition of restrictions on crowd numbers, and perhaps on access to particular parts of the ground. Such restrictions can be lifted as and when the improvements are made and a fresh certificate issued. All grounds now have safety certificates, many of them containing restrictions on attendances.

It is important to stress that the restrictions imposed on attendances at matches are not necessarily impractical or unrealistic. The opposite is perhaps the case. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that many of our football grounds were built to entertain vastly larger crowds than clubs can expect to draw now. There has been only one instance this season—in Scotland—of a larger crowd arriving for a match than could be allowed in under the restrictions in force.

The hon. Gentleman will agree that it follows that clubs should plan their ground improvements on a similar realistic basis. It would be nonsense for clubs with average gates of about 1,000 to claim financial help for expensive improvements aiming at crowds of 30,000.

The report received by my working group from the Football Grounds Improvement Trust last week made it clear that its approach to clubs has been on that realistic basis. The trust bases its grants to clubs on their recent history of attendances. Most of all, that means that they must tailor their investment to the cloth of their market potential.

Mr. Martin Stevens: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the Football Trust grants are being paid in reasonably good time? One hears stories of clubs having to pay for improvements and wait a considerable time for the grants.

Mr. Tracey: I assure my hon. Friend that we are doing all that we can to make good that point. I was about to deal with the timescale for the improvements to grounds.

My working group considered last week how soon the programme of safety improvements needed to be carried out. The consensus was that five years was a reasonable timescale. As I have already said, the immediate safety concern has been met by restrictions placed on grounds by the responsible local authorities. Decisions on how quickly to bring forward improvement works are therefore for football itself, and especially for the clubs. But such decisions are for them to make and to justify in normal business terms.

The working group has not yet reached any final conclusions; I cannot as yet, therefore, give the hon. Gentleman any Government decisons. But it looks likely that the Football Grounds Improvement Trust will be able to fund the major share of the costs of the safety improvements sought by clubs within a period of five years. That seems to the working group to be a reasonable period. This is not yet to close the door. Some uncertainties remain, and we shall consider further the final recommendations of Mr. Justice Popplewell.

I should say that there is another important consideration on which the working group spent some time last week. That is the contribution that the game of football can make. I entirely accept what the hon. Gentleman has been saying about the lack of money in many parts of football; he would also accept that this is not due in all cases to bad luck. Like any business, football must take responsibility for its own mistakes and for its own problems. The governing bodies — the Football Association and the Football League — have a lead to give here, and we discussed within the working group possible ways by which they might raise new money for the game, or redistribute, for safety improvements, some of the existing income. I assure the hon. Gentleman that some leading figures in football agree with some of the ideas that he appeared to condemn at the beginning of the debate. Of course, the decisions are for the clubs, not for me; but the House would expect any responsible Government to take account of what people in a commercial industry are prepared to do for themselves in decisions about dispensing taxpayers' money.

May I deal now with two of the specific points raised by the hon. Gentleman—first, the so-called tax burden, which is regularly mentioned in the press and in football. The betting duty on the pools is not a tax on football, as many would have us believe. It is a tax on gambling, and any reduction in the tax would directly benefit the pools promoters, and presumably their customers, rather than football. We also hear about a Government-created levy board.

As regards a Government-created levy board, I must point out that such a body—albeit a voluntary one—already exists, in the Football Trust. I can only praise the work and contribution of the Football Trust.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman discussed the question of the alcohol legislation and its effect on clubs' finances. he is aware why this House, after much discussion, decided not to exclude executive boxes from the controls on alcohol. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who has been mentioned, undertook to review that point and he will do so. What he requires—I have his full authority to say this—is sound evidence from the football authorities and clubs, which has not yet been provided. When it is, I assure the House that my hon. Friend will study it carefully.

Let me close with some general comments, which look forward a little. The game has been hit hard in recent years, and in particular in the past six months. It is now very much at the crossroads. The twin concerns of safety and security to which I referred at the beginning of my remarks must be dealt with. To use a well-known phrase, there is no alternative.

I want to encourage football forward, and I echo what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said on many occasions about the need to involve the family and the community. Families can be involved in football as much as in other matters. Many parents are now frightened to take their children to matches, and even more frightened to let them go on their own. Much damage has been done to the image of the game. There is a need for fresh ideas and marketing. I appeal to the clubs to consider much more closely the role that the family and the community can play. Many clubs have already introduced successfully family enclosures. The examples are well known. I commend them to all football clubs. I commend, for example, the FA's scheme at Wembley, and I am aware that some League clubs have successful schemes of community use of their facilities, for example, Fulham and Arsenal. Oxford United has recently concluded an agreement with the local council whereby its staff engage in community activities in return for financial assistance from the authority. I would like to see these ideas and thoughts extended.

For me, the game and the clubs need to get back into the community. The activities do not need to be large-scale, and the precious grass on pitches can be protected. But clubs can use their local reputations, skills and facilities to aid and develop community programmes with local schools, pensioners groups, youth organisations and clubs and so on. As sports Minister, I have a double interest here. We need new facilities and opportunities for sport and recreation. I see a potential marriage here of great value. Football needs the support of the community, and the community needs more facilities and opportunities for recreation. It would also benefit from more involvement in the football club, established for so many generations as a magnet for local interest and support. I welcome the signs that hands are reaching out to do so.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 25 October 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Overseas Aid

9.34 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I seek leave under Standing Order No. 120 to introduce a petition.

I think that the whole House will agree that last Tuesday we had an effective and successful lobby on overseas aid. The petition comes from well over 100 of my constituents who, but for their personal difficulties, would have associated themselves with that lobby and accompanied those of my constituents who came to London to make their points on overseas aid. Instead, my constituents have sent a petition that deals in detail with three points: first, the need to increase Britain's aid budget; secondly, the need to reduce the overwhelming level of debt in Third world countries; and, thirdly, the need to make trade with Third world countries much fairer.

The prayer at the end of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Right Honourable Timothy Raison MP, the Minister for Overseas Development, to take action on these items.

I should like to associate myself with the terms of the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Board and Lodging Regulations

9.36 am

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At about 4 pm yesterday you were asked about the legality of the statutory instrument on board and lodging which will be presented next Tuesday. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) raised a point of order, to which you replied:

"I shall certainly look at it, but I do not think that it is a responsibility of mine."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 438.]

A number of us doubt the right of the House to debate that measure next Tuesday. I wonder whether you, Mr. Speaker, have had an opportunity yet to consider this matter and whether you would like to comment on your findings.

Mr. Speaker: I have nothing further to add to what I said yesterday afternoon. I understand that certain discussions took place during the evening. I am not privy to them.

Energy (Alternative Sources)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mather.]*

9.37 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): This is a historic day. It is the first time that the House has debated for a full day in Government time the subject of alternative sources of energy. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) has been pressing for many years for a day like this, as have other hon. Members. I am therefore delighted that we are debating alternative sources of energy—the "renewable" sources of energy, as some would say, for which I have ministerial responsibility.

This is a subject to which the Government attach great importance. Although the United Kingdom has maintained a programme of research and development in this area since about 1975, the spend of the present Government since 1980 has been at three times the previous rate.

Our work on renewables is an integral part of our approach to energy matters generally, where we seek to ensure that adequate and secure supplies of energy are available to the country at the lowest practicable cost, while meeting safety and acceptable environmental criteria. The evaluation of technologies such as the use of wastes, direct use of the sun, wind and tidal power is an importance part of our industrial strategy to encourage energy industries to develop for the domestic and export market economic, alternative sources of energy.

I should like to set the parameters for the debate in general terms, and I shall seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of the debate to answer points of detail made by hon. Members on both sides.

Some Administrations in the past have sought to plan for our future energy supplies on the basis of central assessments of supply and demand. We do not believe that that approach leads to the most efficient allocation of resources or is the best way of achieving our objectives. In the first place, those kinds of forecast cannot bear the weight of policy making which a central energy plan imposes upon them. Our energy policy cannot by itself control many of the important factors which are international in nature, and the forecasts will inevitably be wrong in many respects. We fool ourselves if we pretend otherwise.

What is required is a much more flexible approach to the energy future in which the essential ingredients are diversity of energy supply, economy of energy supply and efficiency of energy use. Our energy policy is aimed at achieving those goals.

We are particularly fortunate in this country to have substantial indigenous energy sources of coal, oil and gas which, taken with nuclear sources, represent valuable diversity in supply. The exploitation of economic renewable alternative sources of energy promises further diversification which can only be good news for the security of our future energy supply. Only a few weeks ago in Japan, I was asked by one of the Japanese Ministers whythe United Kingdom, so plentiful in oil, gas, coal and nuclear energy, should have such a major investment programme in renewables. I was able to explain, as I explain to the House now, that I believe that this is a wise investment in the future. I believe that renewable alternative sources of energy are a key element in United Kingdom energy strategy. They are already making a useful contribution to the diversification of the United Kingdom energy economy in an economically justified way and they will be important in maintaining diversity in the future.

While the diversification of our energy base is an essential element in building a robust energy economy, our energy policy priorities rest on the belief that market forces are the best way of discovering exactly what customers want and the best means of finding out whether they can have it at a reasonable price.

We have been concerned to set a framework which will ensure that the markets operate in the energy sector with a minimum of distortion and that energy is produced and used efficiently.

A key objective of our energy policy is improved energy efficiency throughout the economy. Energy efficiency is not simply the promotion of energy conservation irrespective of cost. Rather it is to ensure that investment decisions on energy efficiency measures are assessed on the same basis as other cost-saving investments. The potential for cost-effective investment in energy-efficient equipment and technologies is immense. As a nation we waste £7 billion a year on energy. We must cut out that appalling waste. It is for this reason that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State created the energy efficiency office and launched a nationwide campaign to improve our energy efficiency. Now we move ahead with a new impetus because 1986 has been designated Energy Efficiency Year. The aim is to ensure that the public, the business community, local government and central Government become conscious of the need to stop the waste of money and energy in which Britain currently indulges. Hence the slogan of the year is "Monergy 86". That is an opportunity to carry forward the momentum of the present campaign and ensure that our energy resources are employed to their maximum potential.

Returning to our work on renewables, I have to say that I regard the evaluation for use in Britain of the alternative sources of energy as a major British success story with much pioneering work undertaken over the past few years by the public and private sectors. In many cases, the Government and other organisations and companies have worked closely together on a wide range of projects, and continue to do so. I am confident that that spirit of co-operation will continue.

I should like to stress to the House that the development of the alternative sources of energy is not a case of dusting down the older technologies and constructing wooden windmills. Of course not. We are talking here of "state of the art" technology and in many cases working on the frontiers of science. It consequently takes time and much effort to evaluate the individual technologies and to identify those which can make a cost-effective contribution to United Kingdom energy supply.

The original objective of my Department's renewable energy research and development programme was to determine by the mid-1980s the likely cost of renewable energy technologies, together with the nature, size and time of their future contribution to future energy supplies. I believe that this has been achieved in large measure during the 10 years the programme has run.

The programme began in 1974, and expenditure is currently running at about £14 million per year. Since 1979 the Government have spent over £68 million on a

comprehensive range of research and development for the renewable technologies, a considerable advance on the £15·8 million spent in the first five years.

The recent review by my right hon. Friend's Advisory Council on Research and Development of the programme and the setting of revised objectives is a further reason why this is an appropriate time for the House to review recent developments and look forward to the future.

We now group renewable technologies into three classifications: first, the economically attractive, which can be deployed with profit fairly generally at present fuel prices; secondly, the promising but uncertain, where more research is needed to reduce costs or to define them better; and, thirdly, the long shots, which seem unlikely to be useful in the United Kingdom, but which need careful monitoring and exploration.

The broad aim of our renewables programme is to encourage the uptake of commercially attractive technologies and to increase our understanding of those that are promising but uncertain. Following the recent review by ACORD, the programme's new objectives are directed at achieving this goal by the early 1990s.

Most of the technologies which were shown at the beginning of the programme to have the physical potential to provide renewable energy under United Kingdom conditions were at an early stage of development and many of the economic factors were poorly known.

Some technologies were quickly shown to be unsuitable for large-scale use under United Kingdom conditions and no significant research work on them was funded by my Department. Solar voltaic cells and ocean thermal energy conversion are examples here, although the Department of Trade and Industry is continuing to provide support for voltaic cells with a view to their export potential. I had the opportunity to tour the BP solar systems factory at Aylesbury to see the tremendous technology being developed by that massive company, which is putting in enormous investment.

Other technologies have also proved to be uneconomic, but only after fairly extensive research and field trials. Examples here are geothermal aquifers and wave energy, where we have spent £10 million and £17 million respectively on investigating their technical and economic potential. However, we must be selective and concentrate our available resources into the most promising areas. Our policy is to get the best possible value for money from our research and development funds and back the winners. We cannot simply be concerned to assess the technical possibilities of extracting energy from a source without an eye for its economic potential. It is inevitable that some technologies have to be rejected on technical or economic grounds.

Although we are concentrating on those technologies which stand a good chance of becoming economic in the short and medium term, we are funding work with potential in the longer term beyond 2025. In addition, we intend to maintain a credible expertise in those technologies which can be described as "long shots"—technologies that might be deployed cost-effectively only in the unlikely event of a dramatic improvement in the costs and performance or if fuel prices escalate sharply. We remain receptive to new ideas that may offer promise of making those "long shots" economic.

We can point to three major achievements in our programme. First, several technologies have now been brought forward to the stage of being economically attractive as a result of our research and development programme. Our policy for them is to demonstrate their effectiveness in the market place and our everyday lives and to secure technology transfer to companies with a commercial interest in their exploitation. Notable among them are direct solar heating of buildings and the use of wastes for fuel.

Secondly, major advances are being made in other technologies, such as wind and geothermal hot dry rocks, which have promise of becoming economic in the future. Thirdly, comprehensive assessment has been made of individual technologies, and their potential and costs under United Kingdom conditions. For example, we have made major advances in wave technology, and expertise has been developed that may have potential for overseas markets. Here we are maintaining and shall continue to maintain a substantial portfolio of wave patents in the event of that potential being realised.

Passive solar heating, or the direct heating of buildings by the sun, has been shown to be economic in many instances. Passive solar features usually add to the amenity of buildings, and most people find that the living and working environment is improved. I have had personal experience of that — I have been to housing developments that have incorporated passive solar features. That is true, whether at home or in the office.

Our programme has already established that considerable reductions in energy consumption can be achieved by utilising passive solar features in both new and existing houses in the United Kingdom. In trials at Milton Keynes houses of energy efficient design employing simple passive solar features have been shown to use 40 per cent. less fuel for space heating than conventional equivalents. The passive solar gain contributed at least half that saving. Our work has shown that in the longer term direct solar heating by such methods has the potential to save this country approximately £800 million — a staggering figure, but one that is easily identifiable when one examines the results of those important experiments. My Department's future programme of work in that area has been recently reassessed and expenditure is planned to rise from the present £750,000 a year to about £1·5 million a year over the next two years.

As well as incorporating new research and development work to extend the range of technical options and applications available, increased attention will of course be given to information dissemination, educational requirements, market aspects and, above all, technology transfer mechanisms. I regard it as essential that the results of our research and development programme reach those in the community who will have to take the responsibility for the adoption of the technology. A key element in our forward programme, therefore, will be an expanded design studies programme involving architects, quantity surveyors, builders and developers. I was delighted to have the opportunity of addressing the important Watt committee on that subject on Wednesday. I am delighted with the attention that it is focusing on that vital area. We must explore as many avenues as we can to ensure that that important technology gets away from the research station, off the drawing board and into our daily lives.

Biofuels, made from organic wastes or plants grown especially for energy purposes, can provide attractive alternative energy options now, while at the same time making good use of industrial and domestic wastes. Why do we waste wastes if they can provide substantial savings

[Mr. David Hunt]

on our energy bills? Using wastes in that way helps to conserve fossil fuels and increase diversity of supply. I saw several interesting developments in that area on a visit earlier this year to Denmark and Sweden. In many circumstances, biofuels are already economic and suitable equipment is already available commercially from some of the best companies in the world on the technology scene —and they are United Kingdom companies.

An important part of our biofuels programme is the support given to demonstration projects aimed at promoting the wider uptake of waste-burning technologies from both heat and electricity. Our research and development work is proving successful in the extraction and utilisation of gas from large landfill refuse tips, and work is continuing on the production of refuse-derived fuels. Several United Kingdom companies close to large landfill sites have switched on to that renewable source of energy and found that substantial savings can be made in their energy costs, as Thames Board showed me when I visited its factory, where it is taking gas from a nearby landfill site at Aveley. That vital resource is also being tapped and utilised at the Bidston tip, which adjoins my constituency.

We are now beginning to see those economically attractive technologies take off and contribute to energy supply, although much remains to be done if their full potential is to be realised. Several other renewable energy sources also show promise but have not yet reached the stage where they are economically competitive against conventional fuels. Of those others, my Department considers wind energy to be the most promising renewable source of electricity generation in the United Kingdom. Our current research and development programme is concentrating on the development of large machines, the deployment of which is likely to be necessary if wind energy is to make a significant contribution to United Kingdom energy supply. I pay tribute to the work of the wind energy group. As my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North knows, he and I have been to see the impressive wind aerogenerator at Ilfracombe, which has tremendous export potential.

The Government have two major projects under way. The first is the construction of a 3 MW, 60 m diameter horizontal axis machine on Orkney, which is being undertaken in collaboration with the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board. That machine is expected to be completed by the end of 1986. The second project is the construction of a novel 25 m vertical axis machine at Carmarthen bay, with its completion expected by spring 1986. We are also supporting a comprehensive generic research programme both to underpin those two major projects and to provide essential data for the exploitation of the United Kingdom wind energy resource, both on land and offshore. There is a large potential overseas market for reliable cost-effective wind turbines, notably in the United States, Caribbean and Mediterranean areas, which is already being developed. I believe that in this country we have some of the finest technology in the world in that vital area, through the wind energy group and other associated companies. Already those British companies are competing successfully in the export markets.

For hot dry rocks, we have already established that it is a very large potential energy resource for the long term, depending on the ultimate economics of the technology. The major part of our programme is the support given to the Camborne School of Mines in Cornwall, the work of which is held in high regard internationally. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) has been with me to the Rosemanowes site. We are proud, as I am sure the House is, of the tremendous work that is being done, which is the focus of so much international interest.

The main aim of the programme is to examine whether large underground reservoirs of artificially fractured rock can be created successfully so that when water is circulated it can be raised to temperatures useful, for example, for power generation. While the programme has been very successful in meeting most of its objectives, further work down at 2,000 m is still necessary to understand reservoir behaviour before committing major expenditure to undertake deeper work.

The United Kingdom has access to a substantial tidal resource and a number of sites have potential for tidal power. While the technology is not a particular problem, the economics still remain uncertain and are very much site specific. The Severn estuary is one of the best potential sites in the world due to its exceptionally high tidal range. That is why we are providing support for the study by the Severn tidal power group of the technical and financial viability of a Severn tidal barrage financed, built and operated by the private sector. Two locations are now being examined and the results of the study should be available from the group by the end of this year. Naturally, any decisions on future steps will depend on the outcome of the study.

We are also supporting a preliminary study of a smaller but none the less potentially attractive tidal scheme for a Mersey barrage. Preliminary indications are that the Mersey is one of the most attractive tidal power sites in the country. I have had an opportunity to visit the Larance barrage, which gives us an example of what the technology can achieve. As I have explained, we still await the study. It is early days in which to reach any conclusions on the viability of that source.

Conventional hydroelectric power is the only electricity-producing renewable energy technology which is currently used on a large scale. There has also been considerable interest recently in the scope for developing small-scale hydroelectric resources in the United Kingdom. Although this resource is fairly small, and cost-effective technology exists, our funding supports applications that contain an element of novelty.

We have also supported studies to establish the size of this low head resource and, more recently, assisted the Watt committee in its work. These aspects of our programme demonstrate that we are committed to evaluating the whole range of the renewable technologies which offer potential to contribute to United Kingdom energy supply, whether it is our internationally renowned work on wind and hot dry rock programmes or work to evaluate low head hydroturbines of novel design.

I must mention a series of other matters but I am anxious that as many hon. Members as possible should have an opportunity to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must stress that Britain must use to the utmost its huge resources of coal, which will fill the long-term need for liquid fuel in particular. I welcome the pioneering work which I and many other hon. Members have seen

being carried out by the National Coal Board at its coal research establishment at Stoke Orchard, especially on coal liquefaction and gasification.

I am aware that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) had much to do with the inception of the Point of Ayr project—my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) is constantly pressing me about it. The latest information is that site preparation work is in hand. A civil engineering contract will be let shortly and the main construction contract is expected to be let in early 1986. Completion of construction is expected at the end of 1987.

The hon. Member for Midlothian has every right to be impatient. I share his impatience, but it is important that the scale of operation be chosen well so that we can prove and optimise the NCB's process in the most cost-effective way. That is why I am pleased that the 2·5 tonne per day pilot plant project is proceeding so well.

The United Kingdom is not alone in recognising that alternative sources of energy may offer potential to contribute to future energy supplies. My Department is actively involved in international research and development. On renewables, for example, collaboration is undertaken bilaterally through the initiative that my Secretary of State took with Mr. Hodel to achieve greater collaboration between the United States and the United Kingdom. I am delighted that one of the best sellers produced by my Department has been the booklet on passive solar heating, which was produced recently as a result of that initiative. We also have multilateral collaboration through European Community programmes and the International Energy Agency. There is a clear cost-effective benefit from such co-operation. The research, development and demonstration programmes funded by the European Commission give opportunities for United Kingdom companies, universities and research organisations to participate and further develop the renewable technologies for applications at home and overseas.

The Government's attitude towards alternative sources of energy is responsible and imaginative. We have taken positive steps to evaluate all potentially economic technologies and to encourage their integration as quickly as possible into our daily lives.

An essential element in achieving this must be technology transfer to industry, and I should like to commend the efforts of our energy technology support unit at Harwell in working towards this. The achievements in our research and development programme so far confirm that we are on target for a significant contribution from the renewables sector early in the next century.

10.6 am

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I anticipated to some extent what the Minister would say. I, too, am conscious of time, but I have quite a lot to say. I should like first to consider what the Minister said about coal. It is right that we should debate alternative sources of energy and renewable—some people call them benign—sources of energy. The House is aware that fossil fuels are finite. Gas, oil and coal are wasting assets. I should like to develop that theme and even be controversial about when the amount of gas and oil will diminish. I do not want to be precise about that, but we all know that those resources will diminish before the end of the century. Coal will relieve some of the uncertainty, and we have coal enough probably for many centuries. We should be planning now for the gasification and liquefaction of coal.

Although the Government know that gas and oil reserves are finite, they are making not the slightest attempt to conserve them. We have no depletion policy. Indeed, we have no energy policy other than what the Minister said about market forces. The Government's policy is to gobble oil and gas as fast as possible, and to produce more oil than we need. The revenue from that is used to balance the Treasury books and to sustain our ailing economy. The Minister spoke about the Point of Ayr in north Wales, where there is an experiment to make oil from coal, and said that the pilot project was about to start. We have had many promises about that, and the House will have noted the Minister's remarks with great care. But when one remembers that the project will involve 2·5 tonnes a day, one realises that it is a laboratory scheme on an industrial site.

I remind the House that in 1978 I signed two agreements with Sir Derek Ezra to start two pilot schemes in liquefaction using two different technologies. The then Labour Cabinet agreed to a spend of £20 million for those projects, yet today the Minister speaks of a total spend of only £14 million. At the Dispatch Box and in Committee the then Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) promised that the Government would proceed with those two schemes, that they would not spend less and perhaps even spend more, and that the money was earmarked for the scheme to proceed. The skulduggery that destroyed that promise and those schemes is one of the most disgraceful acts of the Department of Energy since the Government came to office in 1979.

When the Minister replies, will he tell the House what the spend at Point of Ayr will be? He has already told us when he hopes to start that project. The Minister did not comment on proceeding with a coal gasification scheme at Point of Ayr, yet we all know that the technology to make synthetic North sea gas has been invented. Much of that work was done at the Westfield site in Fife.

When discussing alternative sources of energy we must remember that the likely life of indigenous North sea gas has been considerably amended. Will it serve the home demand for the rest of the century? Have there been discussions about extending the life of North sea gas by using coal? Has any thought been given to having a depletion policy for North sea gas? Why should we gobble it up when we have sources of coal to make synthetic North sea gas? Can the Minister explain why the National Coal Board no longer has on the board a member for research and science? Since Dr. Joe Gibson retired five years ago there has been none. That may be because the Government have changed their policy or because of Mr. MacGregor. I understand that when some of my hon. Friends visited him he said of new technology that he had no intention of reinventing the wheel.

The Minister spoke of his visit to Japan, and hon. Members read of it with interest. I do not criticise, rather I compliment him on visiting so many places. He is generous in sending me his press releases about them. A Minister should make such visits, and I compliment him on them. Some people think that the visits are merely trips, but I know that a Minister's life is arduous.

I hope that when the Minister was meeting Japanese Ministers he saw a report in *The Times* of 24 June 1985 which referred to the Japanese non-nuclear research programme, for which £127 million had been earmarked. It is described rather startlingly as a sunshine and

[Mr. Alexander Eadie]

moonlight programme. I hope that he observed that 56 per cent. of that spend has been budgeted for the development of coal gasification and liquefaction. That makes the Government's sum of £14 million seem ridiculous. I read in great detail how the Japanese proposed to tackle that technology, and it bore a close resemblance to the technological process that we developed. The House is entitled to ask whether the Government gave that information to the Japanese or whether the Japanese pinched it, because their report and our process are identical.

I now turn to combined heat and power. I do not criticise the Minister for not mentioning it. Indeed, I am compelled to mention it because I was instructed so to do. I received a letter from Lothian regional council asking me to raise the matter. As the Minister knows, Edinburgh was chosen as one of the lead cities. The Minister has a responsibility to inform and update the House on what is happening in this important energy area. The potential of combined heat and power was best described in an article in *Power Generation* in January 1985 written by W. R. H. Orchard. It was entitled

"Combined Heat and Power — the Nine-Star Energy Option."

The article states that combined heat and power has the potential to provide almost half a million years of direct employment in construction, and to generate 400,000 new jobs, thus benefiting the economy. It would increase national income by £7·6 billion per annum and consumers' fuel bills would be 20 per cent. lower. It would burn 19 million to 33 million tonnes of British coal each year, which would provide 36,000 jobs in the coal industry. It would save energy—mainly coal, oil and electricity—and would provide an electricity generating capability that was equivalent to six new 2,000 MW power stations. It would avoid the need to import 3·5 billion therms of gas per annum and would earn a 5 per cent. real rate of return on overall investment. That is a graphic account of an available energy option provision, but the House would be foolish to ignore this graphic illustration of the advantages of combined heat and power. One of the most powerful arguments that I can use in favour of combined heat and power is that it would provide hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens with better creature comforts.

I endorse the Under-Secretary of State for Energy's comment that this debate is to be welcomed. It is, perhaps, too graphic to describe it as historic but it provides the House with an opportunity to discuss the Government's rearranged programme for the development of renewable sources of energy. That programme was announced on 2 July 1985 by the Under-Secretary of State in reply to a question from his hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller).

On that occasion he gave a convoluted reply about the £14 million that is to be spent on research and development. To try to put a gloss on it, he referred to £68 million having been spent between 1980 and 1985, compared with the expenditure of £16 million in the period 1975 to 1980. The yah-boo approach — that this Government have spent more on research and development than the Labour Government—is wrong. Much more should have been spent. In the light of the revenues from North sea oil it is indefensible that much more money is not spent upon research and development. I hope that that point will be made during the debate.

The Government's approach to the new programme is wrong. They say that their first objective is to back winners. All of us want to do that, but their language is very much like the language that would be used by somebody who knows more about the racetrack than about research and development. The reality of backing only winners in research and development is a contradiction in terms. Such a philosophy is the opposite of what is needed. It means that research and development is smothered before one begins to make headway. There will be losers in research and development.

I understand the desire to get projects away from the drawing board and out of the laboratory and to find a use for them. However, if the Under-Secretary of State uses the language of the race track to describe research and development, I must confess that I prefer the language of a report entitled "Deciding about Energy". It deals with research and development into renewable energy sources. This is described as "technological pluralism". The argument is that wasteful duplication of effort ought to take place as a result of competition between rival teams and projects. The report argues for pluralism in the funding of agencies and for creative disorder, since this accompanies the attempt to break into new technological territory. That is preferable to the Minister's strategy, because it will produce winners. Research and development will not be stifled.

In their programme the Government have backed the direct solar heating of buildings. They propose to encourage the private sector to design buildings that will make the most of solar energy. They claim that it could cut heating and lighting costs by 30 per cent. They say that solar houses are economical and that the occupants like them. Do the Government base their conclusion upon the 40 houses using solar energy that have been built at Milton Keynes? The Under-Secretary of State said that 10 million tonnes of coal equivalent—worth about £800 million a year—could be saved by the adoption of solar heating. The House is therefore entitled to ask the Under-Secretary of State to explain why the Government are not allowing such council houses to be built. Council house ratepayers should also be able to reap the advantage of the Government's claimed savings from the use of solar energy.

The Government's programme refers to the fact that biofuels have considerable economic potential. The Under-Secretary of State referred to the possibility of discussions with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and with the farming industry to widen support for research and development into the compaction and use of straw for fuel. It is in the interests of the Government and the industry to develop alternatives to in-field burning.

The Under-Secretary of State referred to his reservations about wood as an energy crop and said that further investigation is needed. However, is the Department of Energy aware that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is cutting back on research and development? The Government have just announced that they intend to close the institute of agricultural engineering research, which is sited at Penicuik in my constituency. The laboratory at Lasswade in Midlothian where research is done into veterinary matters is also to be chopped. The whole agricultural community is incensed

at those proposals. We hear about all the research that is to take place, but who will pay for research into biofuels? Will it be the Ministry of Agriculture or the Department of Energy?

The Minister described geothermal energy at length. I understand that the Southampton heating scheme has been abandoned or delayed. Will the Minister comment on that scheme?

Wind power has been given approval, but can the Minister tell us whether the aerogenerators are of British design? How many are of foreign design? I recently corresponded with the CEGB on this matter and the reply from the board was unsatisfactory. The Minister talks about market forces and I suspect that they may determine that we take foreign generators because of the claims made on their behalf. I hope that I am wrong and that the Minister will give us facts and put my mind at rest.

The wave energy programme is to be discontinued and that must be a major aspect of our debate. The decision is a blunder and the Government are in danger of making themselves look foolish. One of our best research scientists on wave power, Mr. Stephen Salter, has published many articles and he makes a telling point when he says that when the wave research programme began the Department of Energy set a target of 20p per KW hour. That was later reduced to 10p and, as the work continued, to 5p. If 5p is in sight, that is good progress by any research standards. So why is the programme being shut down?

I am sure that the hon. Member for Devon, North has read the article by Mr. David Ross, a well-known journalist, in the May issue of the journal of the parliamentary alternative energy group. The article said:

"A secret report has warned the Government that Norway is about to generate electricity from the waves more cheaply than the newest, most efficient coal-fired plant.

Norway's wave power station is due to be launched in October."

In fact, it is to be opened on 12 or 13 November.

"It has cost less than £500,000 to build and the report says it will produce a kilowatt-hour for 3·4 pence. The CEGB's latest published estimate for coal gives the figure of 3·88p for a 'possible future station.'

The report is by Dr. Peter White, a member of the Wave Energy Group at Lanchester Polytechnic in Coventry where the Clam was invented. He specialises in turbine design and went out to Norway as part of the British programme of research into wave energy—which is just ticking over on a pauper's grant. The Norwegians were happy to open the books and the construction site to an outside assessor. The leader is Dr. Knut Bonke, who recently made the report available to me; he said that he had high hopes of selling similar units around the world, particularly to countries which have to burn oil to generate electricity.

The Norwegian device is a . . .Multiresonant Oscillating Water Column. It is a 60-foot chimney standing on the coast against the rocks in deep water north of Bergen. As the waves rise and fall inside it, air is pushed up and out through a turbine and then sucked in to fill the vacuum as the water level falls . . . The 'Multiresonant' refers to one of the distinctive Norwegian contributions, a pair of harbour walls which reach out into the sea to capture more of the available energy and increase efficiency. Dr. White has deliberately used the most cautious assumptions . . . The White report has been sent to the Energy Technology Support Unit at Harwell which oversees the British wave energy programme."

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Harwell?

Mr. Eadie: Yes, Harwell. I will come to that later.

The report continues:

"its own estimates of a cost of a unit of wave-electricity have usually been around 8-9 pence. It was on the basis of such estimates that the Department of Energy pulled back from going to sea with a full-scale prototype. The new report will be particularly galling for ETSU because it is ETSU itself which financed the visit."

I said that there was a danger of our being made to look foolish. The Minister must explain why it is proposed to axe the wave energy programme. It is not justifiable. Much of our technology has gone into the Norwegian project and we shall look foolish in the eyes of the world if we decide to stop our programme. I have masses of documentation to prove that the decision is idiotic.

We must examine priorities. Given the availability of North sea oil and gas for at least the next decade, it is logical to invest some of the profits from the North sea in a broad energy programme. Of course, we must not forget that security of energy resources is an important factor for a country that is surrounded by sea.

The Minister hinted at employment opportunities and he knows that the United States claims that more than 30,000 people are employed in renewable energy projects, particularly those involving solar and wind energy.

A group interested in renewable energy sources has sent me the sort of programme that we should be adopting. I put it to the House because it contains some interesting suggestions. It calls for a £150 million expansion programme for research and development and takes the trouble to itemise various projects. It says that there should be

"Continued and expanded support for large-scale, on-land wind, including vertical axis machines".

The report includes an estimate of £15 million for that work.

The document calls for

"a crash programme of offshore wind development."

The sum involved is £30 million. It suggests that there should be

"serious support for small-scale wind turbine development including preferential subsidies to relevant small firms."

The sum involved is £15 million. One of the reasons for support for windmills in California is the introduction of tax incentives. There is nothing crazy about that. The document continues by suggesting

"a commitment to a series of mini-tidal barrages, starting first with the Severn mini-barrage."

The £20 million for studies in connection with that is peanuts. There is nothing wrong with mini-barrages. They are technologically feasible. In Scotland whole tracts of country are available. Lochs are scattered all over the place.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a mini-barrage is being developed in my constituency?

Mr. Eadie: The right hon. Gentleman should address his question to the Minister who seems to be befuddled at what I am saying.

The document suggests the

"refunding of the United Kingdom wave programme".

A modest £30 million is involved. It calls for

"a major commitment to bio-fuel research and exploitation"

involving £15 million and a

"continued commitment to geothermal"

involving £15 million. The document continues:

"Another £10 million would be needed for the administrative unit which should be moved out of Harwell. This would make a total of £150 million, significantly less than nuclear R & D (£220 million) and would provide the country with what the Government claims to want: a wide range of alternative sources of energy."

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend makes an important point about Harwell, wave energy and Norway. Does he know whether the unit at Harwell is distinct on its own with nothing to do with the wider and better known activities at Harwell, which have something to do with atomic energy, which is a rival to wave energy?

Mr. Eadie: The claim is that the wave energy activity at Harwell is independent. Perhaps the Minister will reply to that question. There is a feeling abroad that it is all wrong, that nuclear and wave research should be done together but that objectivity is being blocked. That might be a gross slander but that feeling is abroad in the industry.

The report continues:

"Such a programme could easily absorb two or three times the current level of funding"—

what a pittance that £14 million is—

"immediately, rising to £15 million per annum within two or three years. Subsequently large capital investments (e.g. on tidal) would be required. It would be, we believe, money well spent: it should help ensure that the UK will be in a position to exploit at least some of the £200 million tonnes of coal equivalent potential p.a. that renewable sources represent, when required."

I hope that we shall have a wide-ranging debate. I agree with the Minister that it is right for the House to debate this important aspect of energy provision. I shall listen with interest to other hon. Members.

10.44 am

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I apologise because I shall have to leave the House before the end of the debate; I have a long-standing engagement.

It is appropriate that we should be discussing alternative sources of energy today because some of us, including the Minister, were desperately looking for alternative sources of energy in the Chamber at 3 am. That might account for the sparse attendance today.

I declare an interest as a director of one of the subsidiaries of a major construction group which is heavily involved in conventional and alternative sources of energy.

I hope that the House will find time to pay tribute to the Minister for the enthusiasm and energy which he brings to the subject. He can be seen in various forms of attire climbing towers and travelling here, there and everywhere to study the subject at first hand. He brings a freshness of thought which is good for the House and for alternative sources of energy. I compliment him.

I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate because it covers areas of advanced technology on which the future of the country depends. If the programme is successfully developed, we shall be able to provide new sources of energy not only for ourselves but for underdeveloped countries. The subject involves varying degrees of technical sophistication and commercial competitiveness.

Conventional sources of energy can be complemented by further improvements in energy conservation. The Minister was right to stress that we still have a long way to go before our buildings become energy efficient. One of the best investments for the country would be to proceed with the conservation programme and to convince people that it is in their interests to conserve energy.

It is tempting to range over all the alternatives such as solar power, biomass, wind power, tidal power, wave power, water temperature gradient, hydropower, geothermal energy and so on. I shall confine my remarks to wind power and tidal power, with particular reference to the Severn barrage. I choose to discuss wind power because the Under-Secretary of State has said that it seems to be one of the most attractive renewable sources for generating electricity. Information from the industry confirms that view.

The United Kingdom has considerable expertise and there is much overseas experience on which to draw. Several European countries have sponsored programmes, as has the United Kingdom. The combination of commercial enterprise and favourable tax laws has particularly benefited Denmark and the United States. In the past five years Denmark has installed 1,500 wind turbines with a rated capacity of 50 MW. By the end of the year that will represent about 0·4 per cent. of Denmark's electricity supply. In 1984 Denmark exported about 1,600 units. It is calculated that its wind turbine manufacturing industry has provided about 300 new jobs in the past five years.

The United States has established a tax regime which encourages private investment in wind parks. Earnings result from the sale of shares in such projects and from operation and maintenance. The combination of state and federal legislation has encouraged development in California to such an extent that by the end of 1985 about 13,000 wind turbines will have been installed—5,200 south-east of San Francisco and a further 3,900 in the desert near Los Angeles. It gives some idea of the installed capacity if we remember that the wind turbine generators already installed in the United States provide 1,000 MW, equivalent to the output of one of our nuclear power stations.

As so often with technology, the United Kingdom has made a slow start. However, in the current year the Department of Energy will be contributing £14 million of taxpayers' money to support all forms of renewable energy, much of it going to wind energy. I emphasise that it is taxpayers' money because, too often, when we are asked to support some of the wilder and woollier schemes that scientists think have long-term potential, we forget that we must obtain value for money for the taxpayer. We do not have any money of our own; it is always taxpayers' money, of which we are the stewards.

There has been considerable financial commitment from commercial firms in this country. They have designed and built the machines, and I understand that two of the installations have operating experience in excess of 5,000 hours. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken a keen interest in that area and has seen the achievements for himself.

The industry tells me that there are several areas in which it would welcome support. Both Government and CEGB support is required to take the Orkney 60 m wind turbine generator to second generation design. The best help, however, would be given if the CEGB showed commitment by actually purchasing one of the machines. If orders are placed during the next two or three years, the manufacturers and the purchasers will have the advantage of batch production.

Greater help for exports is needed and we might press our friends in the Overseas Development Agency and other Government Departments to purchase wind turbines as part of the aid programme. They have enormous potential to provide sources of energy where none exists.

If we strip the aid programme of all its glamour and hard work, we often come back to the fact that there is a lack of sources of real energy at reasonable prices.

I hope that we can also look for stimulation of the home market. Apart from pure tax incentives, there should be lower rating and better buy-back rates for electricity provided under the Energy Acts.

On tidal power, the House will be aware that almost any discussion of the Severn barrage is bound to lead to the question, "What about the Severn crossing?" It is inevitable that, however much those two projects may be technically diverse, they are linked in people's minds. If it were shown that the Severn barrage could provide a viable and sensible crossing, there could be a vast contribution of public funds made available for that project rather than for the building of another bridge or a tunnel.

As the House will be aware, over the years several sites have been considered for tidal power. The Severn estuary, with a tidal range of up to 12 m on spring tides, represents one of the best opportunities in the world to harness tidal power for electricity generation. There have been various studies of the project during the past 50 years. It appears that with modern construction methods, improved generating machinery and modern technology, the Severn barrage could be a serious competitor in electricity generation.

The Department is to be congratulated on commissioning a report from the Severn tidal power group on the technical and financial viability of a barrage built and operated by the private sector. I understand that the report will be available towards the end of the year, and will include an assessment of the environmental and regional effects of the scheme. If private sector investment is to be attracted — and Conservative Members applaud that — much will depend on the rate of return, which must be at a realistic level.

The position will be complicated because any financing scheme will need to be a very long-term projection of the trend in world energy prices. The barrage scheme would effectively replace coal-fired power schemes, so an assessment would be needed for the value of coal replaced in the first half of the 21st century. If the project is to be viable in all other aspects, special consideration must be given to planning procedures because unnecessary delays could threaten even the best of financial calculations.

Some hon. Members may ask whether the labour troubles and the cost overrun of the Thames barrage will be repeated with the Severn barrage. That will not necessarily happen because, with careful planning, and with the benefit of hindsight, many of the troubles encountered on the Thames barrage can be avoided. Similar problems have been met in other large-scale projects, usually those involving advanced technology. When different working rule agreements come into use on a site, special management skills are needed to avoid the obvious problems. Quite often, insufficient design time is allowed, which complicates both programming and site negotiations.

Discontinuity of work load and the high level of on-site mechanical work that is often inappropriate to conditions prevailing on such sites are other sources of possible frustration and delay. Many of the problems can be avoided by good site management and the clients should be persuaded not to indulge in ill-judged involvement and interference in on-site management.

One of the factors in favour of the Severn barrage is that it is based on mature technologies with well-established design, construction and operating experience. There could be a low concentration of manpower at the barrage site and much of the mechanical construction could be carried out away from it, thus spreading the job creation prospects of the scheme. It is probable that a fully developed design could be used, which would help to reduce the unknown quantities that are so often a recipe for disaster in some of our largest and most imaginative projects.

Wales and the south-west have a reputation for encouraging job creating developments. I imagine that there would be considerable local support for the scheme. However, it would be important to clarify the attitudes of regional and environmental interests at an early stage. The Government must establish their attitude to factors not directly related to the economics of the barrage — for example, the need for strategic diversity in energy sources, insurance against unpredictable increases in energy costs and the potential for job creation. Any private investor who hoped to take part in such a scheme would need to be assured that the Energy Acts would not inhibit structural arrangements between him and the electricity supply industry.

I draw the attention of the House to the increasing possibilities of recycling waste in all its forms. Modern technology and increasing fuel prices have combined with environmental considerations to make this an area worthy of more study. Besides the conventional sources of waste that can produce heat, such as farm and domestic waste, the time must surely be coming to re-examine the policy of the European Community on the storing of surplus agricultural products.

Leaving aside the doubtful morality of subsidising the production of goods for which there is no market, and the fact that price protections often prevent the Third world from finding markets for its products, there must be a better way to handle the problem of surplus products. Should we not consider the economics of turning agricultural surpluses into fuel? If that could be achieved at reasonable cost, it must be a worthwhile line of approach. However, having seen the slowness of reaction in Brussels to the supply of grain for Africa, such a suggestion is almost bound to fall on deaf bureaucratic ears.

Some of the alternative sources of energy represent new hope for underdeveloped countries. Some of them could provide all-important energy unrelated to mineral resources. They open up new prospects for some of the poorest people on this earth. For them, and for us, we must continue to support the valuable efforts already made by the Government. We must continue to support international effort and co-operation in providing alternative energy sources to underdeveloped countries. I hope that we shall continue to look at all alternative sources of energy with the same care and consideration, but with the same regard for the taxpayers' money, as the Minister has shown.

11 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the opportunity of debating this subject, and I acknowledge at the outset the Minister's personal interest and commitment to it. That is appreciated in all parts of the House. However, despite the Minister's

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

best endeavours, we are a long way from where we should be in terms of commitment to and funding of renewable energy sources.

Reference has been made to the conflict of choice between conventional existing energy sources, the development of nuclear power and the development of alternative energy sources. It seems that there is a conspiracy afoot to prevent the full-scale potential development of alternative sources of energy, while continuing to make a substantial commitment to nuclear power—that despite the fact that after 30 years' work on nuclear power many problems remain unresolved.

The small amount of investment that has been put into alternative energy has prevented the yielding of results that might change our whole conception of how we might move forward in energy requirements in the 21st century.

For that reason, what Harwell does in the area of alternative energy should be separated out, because the suspicion cannot be avoided that Harwell has an interest ultimately in ensuring the continuation of nuclear-related research. It therefore does not appear to have the same commitment to securing the viability of alternatives. However, I do not wish to concentrate in this debate on the problems that surround the nuclear power industry.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): The hon. Gentleman made a sweeping statement about many problems relating to nuclear power remaining unresolved. There are not many problems unresolved, although there are some problems to which different solutions have been proposed. The hon. Gentleman should be careful when making sweeping assertions that do not have any foundation in fact.

Mr. Bruce: Without wishing to go down that road, I would remind the hon. Gentleman that an inquiry at Sizewell has just shown that after 30 years we do not seem to be clear about the type of reactor that Britain should be developing. The Government are talking about importing flawed American technology rather than developing British technology and after 30 years of research we have not developed a successful British reactor. That being so, it cannot be claimed that we have fully justified that scale of investment and continuing commitment in that area, never mind the possibilities of disposing of nuclear waste, a problem that we are far from having solved.

We are moving into an area of controversy in Scotland because of the application for a fast reactor fuels reprocessing plant at Dounreay. There is much concern about whether that is desirable or justified, and the way in which the Government handle such matters reinforces the perception among many people that there is a conspiracy to distort the balance.

For example, at Sizewell, where there were strong local objections, the Government opted for a full-blown inquiry so as to drown them. At Dounreay, where there is local support but many wider national policy considerations about the future of the fast reactor programme, the Government have opted for a local inquiry so as to close off the option of having those discussions fully aired. The Minister should tell the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is handling the inquiry, that the application at Dounreay is an ideal opportunity to use the public planning inquiry commission that exists in theory but has never been invoked.

The debate is about alternative energy sources. Nuclear power is one of those alternatives and the Minister went through the renewable sources list in some detail and ably covered the areas of potential and actual research and spoke of the developments that have been going on.

Those who have received representations from people involved in the wave programme will have been struck by the bitterness with which they have greeted the cut in that programme, not to mention the bitterness they feel about the way in which they are judged by comparison with the conventional and established forms of energy renewal, both in terms of expected rates of return and the amount of investment that they are allowed to use to overcome their problems. Just when they think that they are getting there, the funding is cut from under them and the opportunity to go ahead with something with real potential is closed off.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) pointed out that the wave power programme was given the objective of securing 20p per kW and has achieved something less than 5p, which is close to becoming competitive. Those involved in the programme speak badly about the way in which they feel the Department has misrepresented what they have achieved so far. Leaving aside the heavy intonations of sarcasm that appear in the various articles written by people closely involved with the subject, David Ross, to whom reference has been made today, states in his summary:

"Wave energy is not to be captured for Britain because it is too expensive—there is not much of it available anyway—and the noise might frighten the fish."

The frightening of the fish aspect came from Harwell.

The estimated cost is 3·4p per unit. The Norwegians are going ahead next month with a pilot scheme that looks to be commercially attractive. We in Britain should not be allowing them to get ahead in this area of technology. Many frustrated engineers in this country feel that we should be involved in that programme.

Those involved in the wave programme have made various comments to demonstrate their concern about that rate of return and the investment criteria applied to them but not applied to other forms of energy. They talk about the pay-back period and the costings that could be achieved on the basis of various pay-back period assumptions, and they conclude that the cost of generating wave power could be reduced to 1·45p. They say:

"These figures are of course mere fantasy because there is no question of the Treasury treating the early phases of renewable energy schemes as favourably as established methods."

That is the nub of the problem. If we are to make progress in Britain with renewable energy, we must approach the whole matter in a more favourable light.

The potential for wave power, for example, was originally estimated—perhaps ambitiously—at 120,000 MW. That has been trimmed back time and again until the current figure is 6,000 MW. That is sometimes described as a rather paltry amount. It is, however, 25 per cent. of our electricity generation capacity and twice as much as we get from nuclear power, so it is an important potential which should be receiving more, rather than less, funding from Government.

The Minister has expressed interest in the Mersey barrage and its potential. It has been suggested to me that a go-ahead on that type of scheme would be a good basis, for example, for paving the way for the Severn barrage. I appreciate that the Minister misunderstood comments that had been made about the Severn barrage. It is a major

project and not in itself a mini-barrage, which would be a different form of development. The Mersey barrage might be the right type of scheme to have the go-ahead because it would test the viability of something more substantial—for example, the Severn barrage.

Other areas of potential development have been mentioned by hon. Members and I will not develop them in detail now, except to repeat that they need more funding and to be given different criteria if they are to have a chance to develop. Indeed, if they were treated even half as kindly as the Government have treated the nuclear industry, we could develop the various options.

I do not want the Minister to assume that I am making these comments because I am dissatisfied with the nuclear industry or that nuclear power does not have a use. It is simply that we are disproportionately committing funds to that area when we should be committing them elsewhere. I ask that we now put the same kind of money into alternatives. If we did that, we should increase the range of options available to us in the next century and that would put nuclear power in a different perspective.

The House may be interested to know that six years ago, when I was energy spokesman for the Scottish Liberal party, I produced a pamphlet entitled "Putting Energy to Work". I re-read the pamphlet before entering the Chamber. I regret to say that, six years on, many of the problems that I identified still exist. The recommendations contained in the pamphlet have been embarked upon only tentatively. Heavy stress was placed in the short term on the enormous potential that lies with conservation. The Association for the Conservation of Energy describes it, in my view rightly, as the fifth fuel. The Minister of State and the Secretary of State are launching a campaign to save energy under the slogan "Get More for Your Monergy". I think that they should find another advertising agency that can provide a better slogan.

It seems that the Government take the view that conservation of energy is such a good investment that they have only to say how good it is and everyone else will get on and do it. If that is so, why have we not achieved much better results? Why are our results less good than those of most other countries? I suggest that the answer is that the Government are not prepared to recognise their responsibility to get the programme going.

There are good reasons why many people do not invest in conservation. One reason might be a degree of ignorance, and I am not denying the value of the Government publicising the advantages of energy conservation. One of the principal reasons is the reluctance on the part of many to put the money up front, as it were. Individuals and industries are suffering from recession and it will not be as easy as the Government seem to think to secure investment in energy conservation. Accountants approach energy conservation adversely and do not allow for the same pay-back as they would for a capital investment programme. They are looking for a much quicker pay-back. Consequently, what are good investments are not presented as attractively as they would be if they were other forms of investment.

The Association for the Conservation of Energy has said that the energy programme that the Government would have to underwrite in terms of grant, investment, building standards and a variety of other factors would produce a direct rate of return that would yield £2,800 million a year on a straight line basis over 10 years for an investment of £2,400 million a year. It would create 155,000 jobs, which would be sustained over the 10 years. A further £1 billion of Government or public money would be saved each year because of the unemployment benefit that would not have to be paid and the tax which would be paid. Much of the work would be done by those who would otherwise be unemployed. It is a massively attractive proposition for a Government who are concerned about public expenditure, but it will be necessary to put the money up front to get that return.

The Government should seriously consider the need to provide that sort of investment to secure the benefits that I have described. If we embarked on that course, we would be making a considerable contribution to getting ourselves out of recession. We would make ourselves more competitive; we would create employment for the skilled and semi-skilled, and especially for the construction industry; we would ensure that we were far more competitive as well as giving ourselves a place in the development of new technology that would have export potential.

Given that these arguments are so convincing, why is it that the Government have not embarked on a much more ambitious programme? I am mystified by their failure to do so. I am advised that the offices of the Department of Energy are some of the least energy efficient in the public service, but as the Government rent them, they do not see the return that would be gained by investing in an improvement in energy efficiency. That is an example of the nonsense that we must overcome.

I genuinely welcome the Minister's recognition of importance on these issues. I support him in what I believe is his private battle to get the Government to give more priority to alternative sources of energy and more funding. I suggest to him and the House that if we are to develop the range of options that we want from alternative energy over the years, it is only right, proper and fair that alternative energy should be given a much greater allocation of resources than has been the case in recent years, bearing in mind the resources that are allocated to the nuclear industry.

11.15 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): The Government and the Opposition have given us some encouragement, but rather on the lines that we all favour truth, beauty and goodness. It has not been specified whether my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is truth, whether the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) is beauty, which indeed he is, or whether the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is goodness. Of course, we all claim these excellent qualities.

Alternative energy is incredibly similar to alternative medicine. When oil is as cheap as it is now, or as cheap as it was in 1972 before OPEC 1973, we do not worry too much about alternative energy. The United States has recently virtually destroyed its synthetic fuel programme on the simple basis that there is no need to worry about alternatives while oil is so cheap. Until someone in the family has a bad back, the family will not be especially interested in alternative medicine. However, the family will find that conventional medicine faces problems in dealing with bad backs and the doctor will advise the patient to sleep on the floor or on a hard bed. He will say, in effect, "We cannot cure you."

However, if a larger or nastier bomb is exploded on Karg island, if there is political upheaval among the Gulf

[Mr. Tony Speller]

states or if our nation turns its back on pollutant energy sources, we shall be left with little usable conventional energy. As the hon. Member for Midlothian said, we have coal in abundance, but if we were not in that position I am sure that we would have to consider the clean and renewable forms of alternative energy. In a sense it is the hole in the ground products versus the renewables.

Both the Government and the Opposition say that alternative energy is a good thing and a nice thing and that we should have more of it, but no one says how much more. I have a deep personal interest in alternative energy, coming as I do from the west country where there is wind in abundance. Although we would not admit it in north Devon, a certain amount of water falls from the sky. In addition, we have tides with a 30 ft rise and fall. We are told that wave power has been abandoned as it is a long shot. I advise those who have come to that decision to try their hand at surfing. If they do, they will feel the power of the waves. I advise them also to note the rise and fall of the tide and reflect on the success in Wales, in many parts of the United States and in Europe of hydroelectric schemes. Is it not more logical to supply rather more funding for these clean and renewable alternatives instead of continuing only with the vast amount of funding that is directed, quite rightly, to fission or fusion technology? Unfortunately, we leave so very little finance available for the very alternatives that may in future become necessities.

I mentioned hole-in-the-ground products, and we are all familiar with gas, oil and coal. The three major speeches in the debate have all referred to the use of coal that goes beyond merely burning it in the grate. I do not have the advantage of the Minister of travelling so freely — indeed, I do not have the benefit of travelling free at all. However, I have had the pleasure of visiting the United States, where the Texaco process is producing vehicle fuel from coal, a system which the Texaco director of research states could be producing more fuel for vehicles by the end of the century than crude oil. That company is looking to the future. Inevitably, there is Japanese participation.

The Japanese are an extremely sensible race. When I visited that country with the Select Committee on Energy a year or so ago I was fascinated to find that the Japanese are researching an old-fashioned engine called the Stirling pump. It was invented by Dr. Stirling in Scotland in the last century. It has a technical interest now in areas where there is not sufficient conventional fuel. In this context, it may be necessary even to burn cow dung. The Japanese are using this area of technology to develop an engine or pump that was invented in Britain a century ago.

At Bergen, the Norwegians are putting the rise and fall of the tide to electricity generation — a most sensible use. In the area that I represent and along the Severn there is a rise and fall of 30 ft, which must make it worth while developing the relevant technology and using it. It seems that other nations are prepared to use our technology to make the products that we could manufacture ourselves.

As I travel the world on various non-free trips, I find British technology being used increasingly through excellent firms of British consultants, but the materials that are being used are not British. Unfortunately, Britain has never been prepared to put enough money into research and development to allow British companies to make the products that will ensure that "Britain can make it". Such a phrase was used by a previous Prime Minister, but how true it still is. Unless the research and development programme works, there will not be an end product to pay for the research and development programme — the essence of a catch 22 situation.

There are four main fuels — gas, coal and oil from the hole in the ground, and nuclear. I was afraid that this debate might turn into a pro or anti-nuclear one and I am glad to see that it has not. What is the alternative to such energy? It is reasonable to take an overview and say that, along with the Select Committee, many of us feel that we do not as yet have any competent idea of how to cope with nuclear waste. I do not argue that the British nuclear stations are not the most efficient and safe in the world, but I cannot pretend, as the chairman of the alternative energy group, that anything that I have heard over the past three years makes me believe that there is anything like a genuine and permanent solution to the problems of nuclear waste.

It is strange to be talking about alternative sources of energy when we are, as an island, surrounded by gas and oil and built on coal. There is nothing new in the British use of coal — the Romans used it. Interestingly, the Romans also used what might be called intelligent passive solar energy. They laid out their buildings to face the sun and had built overhangs to protect the houses from too much sun. We build our little circles of houses irrespective of how to use alignment to conserve energy. How strange it is that, in particular, the architectural profession in this country appears to be unresponsive to the logic of the weather. Perhaps one should blame those building societies which have no interest in fuel bills.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): And the planners.

Mr. Speller: One must be careful when speaking about planners, as I believe that there are one or two up in the Public Gallery at the moment and I always evade their machinations if I can.

To put a conservatory on the southern side of my house, whether or not it is approved by the planners, will warm the house at no extra cost, while providing all the other things that a conservatory provides. There are so many easy and economic things that one can do.

We are fortunate to have my hon. Friend the Minister in his post because he is prepared to go out on a limb to see whether the subject of alternative energy will interest the House. The answer happily appears to be yes, but only to a limited extent. Whether that is because of the debate on fluoride yesterday, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) was involved, I do not know. Is it not sad that, at a time when we have such problems with energy, our Benches are green — green is a good colour to represent energy conservation — rather than covered with pin-striped bottoms?

I have spoken in passing about what Texaco is doing in its cool water project in California. It is the first example of which I have heard of a full-scale commercial plant producing electricity cleanly from coal. It takes out 97 per cent. of the noxious bits and pieces that cause pollution and, out of one plant, produces enough electricity for a town the size of Plymouth. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the help that he has given in smaller but similar projects carried out by the National Coal Board, particularly in its pilot plants. However, while pilot plants are fine, sooner or later research and development requires a working-size plant so that things are seen to work in

total. We are seen to do so much research on nuclear energy—which I do not begrudge although I should like to see more research on waste—but we could do so much more with so little extra added to the pennies that we already spend on other forms of alternative energy research.

Last week, *The Economist* referred to radioactivity. It said:

"It is invisible, tasteless, odourless. Nobody knows for sure how much there is or where it is and, despite claims to the contrary, nobody knows what to do with it . . . there is enough radioactive garbage in the United States to wipe out the lot of them; by the year 2000, there will be enough to kill every living being."

Any money spent on nuclear waste research is well spent.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Will my hon. Friend elaborate on the emotive expressions

"enough nuclear waste to wipe out the lot of them"

in the United States, and shortly

"enough to kill every living being."

That is not accurate.

Mr. Speller: I shall certainly elaborate. I did not like to use the full quotation because of other emotive phrases. *The Economist*, which tends to be my own trade paper, used another phrase, which is

"nobody knows what to do with it. If Americans were dumb enough to roll in it".

that is, have personal contact, there would be enough to kill them all.

Let us come a bit closer to home and not be emotive. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) has led me into talking about the United Kingdom. Quite close to my hon. Friend the Minister's constituency, British Shipbuilders has dredged up 3 million tonnes of sand and silt from the Irish sea, some of which has been dumped at Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria. The Irish sea is probably the most contaminated waterway in the world. If sand, dredged for building purposes, is dumped by the sea or city, children may well roll in it. There is no secret about the fact that we have had disposal problems. I sought only to say, emotively or otherwise, that there are dangers with nuclear waste that do not exist with water, wind or solar power, other than the self-inflicted wounds that we get on holiday. I have also said how safe I believe our power stations are.

I shall speak now of Parligaes'—that is the name of our group—view of the alternatives, about which my hon. Friend the Minister has talked to us. His Royal Highness Prince Charles, often in the news these days, rightly said two years ago:

"We would be deluding ourselves if we believed that a technology based on an abundant supply of cheap fossil fuels can long continue, and it is even more unrealistic to expect it to spread through the Third World."

The world has two main energy problems. The first is the worsening consequence of the west's overuse of existing energy and the second is the increasing shortage of any decent sources of energy in the rest of the world.

Mr. Frank Hooley, the former hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley, was the excellent first chairman of the alternative energy group. He was followed by a chairman from the other place, Lord Tanlaw, and now I am the third chairman, from yet a third political party. It is good to know that most hon. Members and all those in our group are in favour of alternative energy resources. Unfortunately, there are not enough of us.

We have had the good fortune to have assistance from many parts of industry, not necessarily from those which one would think were in favour of alternative energy. I have had great service from Mr. David Gordon as liaison officer throughout the period of my chairmanship and we, together with major industry, conservation groups and interest groups, are working happily towards the same end.

The hon. Member for Gordon spoke of the Association for the Conservation of Energy. I applaud what it does, and although I do not know whether it created the excellent phrase "fifth fuel" for conservation, it is a good phrase and shows that energy conservation has a key role to play in ensuring that we invest in and use our finite resources in the most efficient manner.

Looked at in macro-economics terms, the issue is simple. We can keep ourselves as warm and comfortable as we now are in this country, and keep the wheels of our industry turning as speedily as they do now and still save not less than 20 or 30 per cent. of the cost of energy. The cost of energy is part of the cost of production and where one can save on cost, one is increasing profit and competitiveness. That is one reason why I join the hon. Member for Gordon in congratulating ACE on its view.

No one has yet mentioned my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, but he too deserves congratulations. It is remarkable that this is the first full day's debate on alternative energy in the lifetime of this Parliament or any other. I pay credit to a Secretary of State who, although he may be under pressure from many other stronger and bigger lobbies than ours, has given us this debate. It is good that he has allowed us our turn to say things which, as I am sure he and my hon. Friend the Minister are aware, may not necessarily redound to the credit of any Government, past, present or future.

If we can reduce the use of energy-intensive work, we may well increase the use of labour-intensive work. The hon. Member for Midlothian talked about the prospect of coal being used as a major fuel in other ways, and I am happy to agree with him. This would ensure the future of the British coal mining industry. The strong trade union movement involved in coal mining has never seemed interested in new technology, yet Britain has in coal a base that will last long after oil and gas have run out and a base for industry and community that we must maintain. It can be used economically and can reduce our dependence on overseas supplies.

One cannot have a debate on alternative energy without saying more about pollution. The British and United States Governments have been ambivalent about the causes of acid rain. It is fascinating that the cities of my youth were black and grimy, yet no one said that there were no fish in the lakes or that there was acid in the water. I suspect that much of today's pollution is caused not by coal burning alone but by the use of coal, chemical products or other fossil fuels which come from a hole in the ground. The gases produced from burning or dispersing are not good to breathe or safe for any plant life. It is therefore even more important that we should use our national resources as cleanly as possible. Various experiments are being conducted, including those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in relation to the National Coal Board and by the hon. Member for Midlothian in relation to Japan. Alas, barely a dozen countries are trying to use existing power sources sensibly.

[Mr. Speller]

Conservation is not just a matter of conserving energy. Insulation and other household schemes for which we have given sufficient grants or loans are important additions. I am a devotee of loans. I do not understand why the Government give grants when loans would enable people to make a profit by insulating and doing sensible things to their own home environments. I should like an energy audit system to be used. This is widely done in the rest of the world, especially the United States where public utilities have discovered that it is more economical to get consumers to use less of their product rather than incur the vast capital cost of new plant. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole referred to cost overruns. It is rare that any form of power generation comes within its budgeted costs. Whereas utilities in the United States have led the field by saying, "We shall pay you to use less power," utility corporations in Britain are keen to maximise sales, although sales are not necessarily the best way to maximise efficiency, strange though that may seem to the layman.

Only one in 10 homes in Britain has insulated cavity walls. One in two homes has adequate roof insulation, thanks to successive Governments and various allowances. Only one is seven homes has draught-proof windows and doors. Only 50 per cent. have any form of thermostatic controls, and even this has happened only because of the growth in central heating. Many of us in the suburbs know about the use of thermostats but there are many other houses where the installation of such controls would more than pay back their cost in less than one year. The pay-back time on energy conservation measures is very short.

Mention has been made of combined heat and power. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), who is unavoidably absent, is known as Mr. CHP. When he arrives on the scene we say, "CHP presumably means that pipe of yours." The pipe always burns, and my hon. Friend burns with support for the type of combined heat and power programme that is prevalent in Scandinavia but is virtually non-existent in Britain. About 45 per cent. of all the energy generated in our power stations is waste heat that disappears into the atmosphere, so we get only about half the energy we produce. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash asked me to say — I do not have his expertise—that a combined heat and power programme must be the logical way to go in a time of ever-increasing costs per unit of energy production.

It would ill become me to make a radical suggestion, but I must point out that any Channel tunnel will be financed by private capital. The capital costs will be vast but the running costs will be relatively low. The Sizewell report, to which the hon. Member for Gordon referred, may approve what is not so much flawed technology as well-checked technology. I am surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford did not leap up to accuse the hon. Member for Gordon of being emotive. Because that PWR technology has been considered carefully it is probably the safest available, although perhaps it is somewhat outdated. If the Sizewell project, with its high capital cost, will produce such low-cost fuel perhaps it should be funded through the City of London. If the City can find the money for the Channel tunnel why can it not do so for the Sizewell project? Perhaps we know what the City would say if we asked it to do so, so we avoid asking the question.

"Rubbish" is the word sometimes used in the House. "Rubbish" is frequently cried by people involved in alternative energy. There are a number of campaigns to utilise rubbish. Perhaps the most prominent is the warmer campaign in which Mr. Evemy is involved and which aims to pelletise rubbish and burn it. The way some of my colleagues strew paper around shows how easy it would be to produce a fair amount of energy from waste paper and rubbish. Not surprisingly, much rubbish consists of paper or wood, or their by-products. This could be easily and economically used for heating along the lines of the combined heat and power programme.

There are other examples of refuse-derived fuel in which waste is turned into pellets. Cadbury's of Bournville used to get rid of 120 tonnes of waste packaging each week, but it has installed a plant to pelletise the rubbish. The pellets are substituted for a quarter of the coal that is normally burnt. The company will save £200,000 a year in this sensible use of what would otherwise be rubbish and waste.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, taking the world as a whole, wood is the substance that is most used to create energy?

Mr. Speller: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. Wood is the basic fuel of the Third world. The world is running out of forests, and I congratulate the Government on the sensible use of what might be called forest farming. The problem is that once a tree is cut down it cannot be used again and replanting must be carried out. We in the West talk about fuel as gas, oil and coal, but throughout most of the Third world fuel is wood.

I hope that in the near future other countries will follow the example of Botswana, which is tiny in commercial and economic terms. In Botswana solar energy is built into the housing programme. The photovoltaic process makes electricity directly from light. I saw on the edge of the Kalahari desert what looked like one of our own telephone boxes and I wondered whether Dr. Who had arrived. No, the telephone box was powered by photovoltaic cells. The construction looked a little like a bird table which was angled towards the light. Light produced electricity and electricity powered the telephone. There were no cables, just a simple photovoltaic process. The Third world may well show the old, developed world what should be done.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) has a pocket calculator, probably one of those that we are often given. I discovered that the batteries in my pocket calculator, which is of the same make, had run out during the recess. Fortunately, I had recently bought a small solar-powered calculator with a memory. The light in this Chamber—there is not always light here—is enough to keep it going. These calculators are commonplace throughout the world but they are treated as gimmicks in Britain. They are not gimmicks; they are the way forward.

I move on from domestic refuse to what is known as "biomass"—another awful word—which covers every-thing from the burning of firewood and cattle dung to the highly controlled anaerobic digestion of sewage and/or slurry or vegetable wastes. About 15 per cent. of the world's energy comes from those sources, while America estimates that the amount of firewood burnt there compares with the energy supplied by its nuclear programme.

Biomass offers advantages to energy supply to agriculture and the environment. My hon. Friend the

Minister called it a winner with enormous potential some time ago. It is viable now by any Government criteria. We must do more than just say that it is viable and step back. We must provide funds for research and development to make it economic to produce. My goodness, this could do so well for us. Professor David Hall of King's College, one of the country's leading biomass experts, uses rather non-scientific phrases. He said that it was time "we stopped pussy-footing about and put some real money into biomass". He is correct, but I wonder whether we will. I hope that my hon. Friend will refer to that when he replies.

I do not intend to labour the subject of wave power. It has been well covered already, but we must return and consider the Norwegian experiment, which uses British technology. It is too easy to say that it is a long shot and we should forget it. An island nation which has tidal water flowing to and fro, hydropower and other sources of water should not write off wave power as a long shot. There is fantastic power available. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole mentioned the Severn barrage. The jobs and opportunities for industry offered by such a construction are worth having.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) has had a long interest in the Severn barrage. He worked for GEC and learnt something about it there. He asked me to say that, while he recognises the difficulties associated with the Bondi project, he supports the project as a means of providing extra generating capacity in the south-west. He has sent his apologies for being unable to be here and has asked that I associate him with my remarks on that form of power.

The Energy Act 1983 opened the door to the private generation of electricity, but in some ways that has made it more difficult. The intended user of a mains connected wind turbine has to overcome technological and economic hurdles to obtain permission to operate through the grid and for connection to it. Rates are another problem. Although problems always belong to someone else, I look to my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the fact that, if one improves one's property, the rating assessment is increased. If someone installs a wind turbine to provide electricity, that person is liable to have the rates on his house increased to such an extent that it was not worth installing the turbine. Perhaps my hon. Friend will have a word with the appropriate Department, because we encourage people to modernise and improve their properties and then penalise them by more than the savings of the improvement. We are back to the old idea that every house must look like the advertisements — like a Monopoly board chip—with nothing interesting about it, and certainly no microchips.

A liability to pay rates which are increased and take back a substantial part of any saving produced by an improvement is ludicrous. Wind power takes up little room. There is one example of a local authority that refused permission for someone to put up a windmill unless it was surrounded by trees to mask it. That would of course also stop the wind, which is one reason why I am so nervous about planners.

Clean energy means that we do not have pollution. A smoker may kill him or herself, and there is an on-cost to the National Health Service which has to look after the result of that person's unfortunate habit. Energy is not dissimilar to that. If we use dirty energy we have the problem of cleaning up the pollution, whether it be the result of acid rain or grime on the Houses of Parliament. The use of clean energy would save the nation those on-costs. We should consider how much the alternative, clean, renewable energies would save in terms of the on-costs of pollution. We all say how lovely the House looks now that it has been cleaned, but it would not have needed cleaning if the energy which we use lavishly here had come from sources other than the old conventional ones. Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are nasty things to have around. The less we have of them, the better.

I have mentioned solar energy in connection with our calculators. Solar energy does not just run calculators. It powers satellites, those objects in space we see but know little about. They are run on electricity, but electricity generated by the sun. If solar energy is good enough for my calculator and Mr. Reagan's satellites, perhaps there is scope to work along those lines. I pay tribute to the energy technical support unit which was mentioned by the Minister. It has compared the economics of renewables with fossil fuels. It has reasonably recommended that we should continue to consider the matter.

I end as I started, by saying we spend vast amounts on the established nuclear industry, which is fair enough, but minute amounts on the renewables. We should study the new ideas now available.

What are the conclusions? We should not be surprised that the Government will spend all that they can afford within their budget. The Opposition can spend whatever they like until they become the Government, when, all of a sudden, they too can only spend that which is in their budget. Some simple things could be done, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider them. I ask that allocation of research and development funds for energy projects should be consistent. They have not been consistent in the past. They have been weighted in favour of conventional fuels. We should think about reforming the Energy Act 1983 to encourage private generation or, at least, give it a sporting chance compared to the CEGB. At present, all the odds are stacked in favour of the CEGB. We do not need a vast change to allow the other side a little more help.

I hate to suggest to my hon. Friend that he should establish a committee, but some form of running committee is needed. It could study obstacles to development, such as the rating system. People probably do not consider such things until they have made the improvements and then received the rating assessments. They then may wish that they had not made improvements in the first place.

The energy equipment testing service at Cardiff university is the only independent testing centre for solar energy in the United Kingdom, and a decision by the Department of Trade and Industry about its future is pending. There must be more co-operation between the DTI, which may say that something will work, and the Department of Energy, which says, "Let us test the product and see whether it will work."

June Morton of the United Kingdom section of the International Solar Energy Society spends most of her time, I suspect, not doing the job that she is paid for, but answering questions from laymen and lay Members of Parliament who do not know where to go for the type of advice that privately funded organisations provide. A renewable energy information centre should be considered because it would cost relatively little and would have a high pay-back.

[Mr. Speller]

The terms of reference for promising energy research and development are, "You have got the problem so you must develop prototypes needed to promote export sales." But when? Hardly ever, officially.

Solar energy is thought unlikely. We rather scoff at it in this country. The sun does not shine as frequently as we might like, but in the Third world—the hotter parts of the world—export prospects are unbelievably high. We are not obtaining our share, because we are not getting research and development projects started here. It is illogical for us to say that because we do not use a product in this country we should not sell it abroad. When I was a young member of the colonial service we used water filters in the tropics produced by three major British firms. No one in Britain used them, but those firms had promoted the technology and sold them around the world. So should it be with renewable energy today.

I wonder whether my hon. Friend would be prepared to meet those of us interested in renewables fairly frequently. I speak as one who might co-ordinate such meetings. We might be able to provide a depth of specialist knowledge which might be helpful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to the Minister in promoting clean renewable energy. Everyone is in favour of it, but wonders whether it will ever come about.

I apologise to the House for labouring longer than I normally do in this vineyard. I am deeply grateful to the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who brought about the debate. It is something that should happen more often, as people say when they meet a nice person. The all-party alternative energy group would like to go on meeting and talking, perhaps not so formally, but looking towards a future when we shall use the wind that blows around the world all the time, the sun that shines somewhere all the time, the water that flows and the tides that rise and fall—all those simple, clean, renewable resources that we have ignored because of the technology of the Victorian age. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why our technology and industry are a little behind. We are still looking back at Queen Victoria, in the time of Queen Elizabeth II. We should be looking to renewable resources as a major part of energy supplies for the future.

11.50 am

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): It is patently obvious in Northern Ireland that we do not have a clearly defined energy policy.

At the planning stage of our new Kilroot power station there was a question of whether it should have coal, oil or multi-fuel firing. Many felt that, from the security point of view, it should have been designed as a multi-fuel station. Others felt the need for an interconnector to Scotland so that we could be coupled to a possible nuclear energy source. In the meantime we discovered a high quality commercial quantity of lignite with a low sulphur content which, it appears, offers a much lower cost than coal, based on its thermal content. For reasons that are not apparent, the energy group of the Department of Economic Development has kept its investigations into lignite very much to itself. For instance, there is the well-proven Winkler process for the gasification of lignite, which would produce much cheaper gas for domestic and, more important, industrial use. Lignite can also be converted to hydrocarbon fuel, and there are other chemical processes based on that form of energy. Yet we are still waiting for a decision by the Government on the exploitation of lignite. Although Kilroot power station is being converted to burn coal, I wonder why there is not also provision to burn lignite.

Added to all that confusion is the role of combined heat and power in the Northern Ireland energy scene. I agree with the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) about the advantages of CHP. I am pleased that the Government have realised that that form of energy could have an important role to play and that they have provided financial support for up to £250,000 on a 50:50 basis to consortiums of joint ventures to carry out a programme of work in Belfast, which, it is hoped, will lead to a prospectus for the formation of a company to exploit CHP. Naturally, such an investigation must include the use of lignite as we now have that fuel virtually on our doorstep.

Belfast city council is very much in favour of the provision of CHP, and its commitment is £50,000 in cash to the consortium behind the concept. That consortium has already been formed and is actively pursuing its investigations under its terms of reference. Unfortunately, due to the limited powers accorded by the Government to our city council, it regretfully cannot become a full member of the consortium.

I share the view of Belfast city council that a CHP station is a necessity for Belfast. In a conventional power station, up to 35 per cent. of the heat in the fuel is converted to electricity, and the other 65 per cent. is wasted as heat to the atmosphere or to the cooling water. That has also been mentioned by the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller). In CHP stations, slightly less is converted to electricity, but approximately 40 per cent. goes as useful heat for heating buildings. It is realised that heat in the form of hot water is more costly to distribute than electricity and that it is viable economically only where there is an area of high heat load; hence the selection of Belfast, which is eminently suitable for such a project.

The heat load is made up of domestic heating schemes together with Government buildings, the central business areas, industry, hospitals, universities, schools and so on. Many district heating schemes have been introduced by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which, as many people know, is a monolithic, bureaucratic institution set up by Government to co-ordinate and streamline housing activities in the Province. It has singularly failed to do that, as is demonstrated by the problems that it has created for Government, the public and elected representatives.

Due to the incompetence of the executive in the mismanagement of the district heating schemes, it is now in the process of converting many to individual heat appliances. All sorts of excuses have been given for that decision, one of them being that metering and payment for heat consumed were unsatisfactory, and considerable debts accrued to the executive, but the real reason is that some of the schemes were badly engineered, causing problems of heat loss. Meters proved to be faulty, thereby causing tenants to withhold payment in the knowledge that they were being asked to pay for heat that might not have been used. In one area the scheme is overboilered and consequently the capital cost charge is high, although that could have been overcome by extending the scheme to cover a larger area.

If district heating schemes are well engineered and the costs are reasonable, they are well liked by the tenants. It must be accepted that the Housing Executive is responsible for a substantial proportion of the heat load in Belfast that could be connected to CHP. The decision relating to the removal of district heating in Northern Ireland may not be in the interests of the economy as a whole. The presentation of the executive's case for pulling out has been biased.

Bearing in mind that the Government are meeting 50 per cent. of the cost of the joint venture for Belfast CHP, it hardly seems logical for the Government, wearing a different hat, to be seen to be encouraging the dismantling of district heating schemes. I appreciate that the Government are against subsidising that form of heating, but the cost of conversion to solid fuel appliances is expensive, and at this juncture would not seem a sensible solution until the joint venture has produced its prospectus in 1987.

There are now two significant options to be considered after the demise of the Kinsale gas option that has now been abandoned by the Government. They are a Minemouth power station to generate electricity based on the use of lignite or the development of a CHP station in Belfast. The CHP option deserves special consideration by the Government in their overall energy policy. The first consideration is employment. There is no sign that assessments are being made within Government of the differing employment and economic impacts on the Northern Ireland economy, especially in terms of job creation and the effect that those options have on the payment of DHSS supplements for heating. Much of the pressure for the Kinsale gas line arose out of the employment that it would create and its rejuvenating effect on our gas industry. If combined heat and power was chosen, those responsible for laying and maintaining a gas distribution network in Belfast could equally well transfer their skills to laying and maintaining a water pipeline.

As the Minister, the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson), knows, we have an extremely alarming unemployment problem in Belfast. Such a scheme would provide employment where it is needed, and for a long time. It might take 10 or 15 years to develop a heat gridwork and a power station. Much of the capital cost of the power plant can be met by local labour. Our local company, Harland and Wolff, is capable of manufacturing the small turbines or engines appropriate to a combined heat and power plant.

The second consideration is low-cost heating with low incremental cost. CHP is probably the most energy-efficient and cost-effective means of dealing with the problems of condensation and damp caused by people being unable to afford adequate heating. The third consideration is security, and security of supply. The potential vulnerability of a single minemouth station and its transmission lines should be compared with a harbour-based CHP station able to burn lignite, imported coal or even oil. Belfast already has the Belfast West power station, which could easily be converted to CHP. It must be realised that the minemouth power station would produce electricity only, whereas a CHP station would produce electricity and heat.

I must also mention what I call the rating of heat distribution networks. Public authorities such as those for water, gas, electricity and telephones are treated favourably in regard to rating. The public utilities also have legal rights concerning wayleaves and disturbing public highways. There is no case law concerning CHP schemes and heat distribution. The Government should as a matter of urgency support the joint ventures of Belfast, Edinburgh and Leicester so that they can make a realistic financial appraisal for their prospectuses. There should be comparability as between the public utilities and heat companies.

I am sure that the Government are aware of the benefits of lower-cost heating from CHP. It is freely admitted that the heat wasted in electricity generation could heat most of the country. If subsidies to certain sections of the community to cope with damp and other problems must continue, the establishment of a system such as CHP under which the cost of staying warm is low must deserve special consideration. There are many benefits to be derived from the development of CHP and it is no wonder that our more efficient competitors such as the Dutch, the Germans and the Swedes are adopting it. I understand that we are to have an Energy Efficiency Year. The Government can participate by adopting CHP as an energy option. It is a much more cost-effective means of saving energy than double glazing and external wall insulation.

12.4 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Our having a full day's debate on this subject in Government time might not be an historic event but it is a welcome and timely development in public attitudes to alternative sources of energy.

Long gone are the days when the subject was shrouded by an aura of quaint eccentricity normally reserved for learned dissertations on the flat earth or flying saucers. Today alternative energy lies at the heart of the energy debate and I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on doing so much to ensure that it is there and not before time.

Alternative energy is about choice and innovation. The enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, their sustained support of the promotion of energy efficiency and the £68 million of investment in research on renewable energy sources during the past five years demonstrate a recognition of opportunity and the resolve necessary to achieve success. As has been said, it also demonstrates that there are problems inherent in the use of or four existing major fuels for generating heat and power.

Many of those problems can be solved. Many of my constituents are involved in the coal industry. The problems of pollution can be solved, given the will and the money. Indeed, given the will and money, the prospects for the coal industry as a whole will be much enhanced by an accelerated research and development programme into alternative uses of coal. Liquefaction and gasification are not merely desirable alternatives to burning coal in grates but vital steps in preparing for a future when oil and gas supplies run short.

Some of the problems that are attributed to our major existing fuels are exaggerated and distorted by special interest groups who seek to manipulate public opinion for their own purposes irrespective of the unnecessary fears and damage that they might arouse. Nevertheless, part of a coherent national energy policy must be the promotion of energy efficiency, the search for alternative sources of power and heat, a fair comparison of the advantages offered by coal and gas, nuclear and oil industries and the

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making of objective judgments. Only in that way can we be sure that the consumer will get value for money, that the national interest is being best served and that the natural British genius for invention is translated into exploitable technology. There can be few more important objectives today than the expansion of our technological base and its conversion into national wealth and jobs.

Many factors must be involved in making fair comparisons. Nobody has a reliable crystal ball in which they can predict future supply and demand or the movement of particular energy costs. It must therefore be realistic and prudent to start from the proposition that, all other things being equal, it is best to eliminate waste whenever possible and to diversify whenever practicable, especially when our sources of supply are home produced. Yet it is at that fundamental point that our system begins to load the odds against alternative energy. The big battalions — the Central Electricity Generating Board, the National Coal Board, British Gas, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and the oil majors—the list is endless—have massive resources which are deployed more or less skilfully to fight their corner. I imply no criticism of people who fight their own corner, but reality must be recognised. The energy supply industry is rich and powerful and too often wins the argument just because of that.

On the other side, there is the commitment and enthusiasm of the Minister and Secretary of State, without which nothing could have been achieved. There is the energy efficiency office, and the energy technology support unit, which have performed vital roles, which I shall mention later. Most of all, there is the growing industrial and commercial awareness created by such measures as the excellent series of breakfast specials, which have brought the question of energy efficiency into the forefront of good management decision making.

Obviously, there is vastly more to do. Colleagues have spoken of a woeful lack of awareness of the possibilities of efficient design among architects. Nevertheless, a good step forward has been taken, in particular the enlistment of public opinion based on sound commercial judgment.

However, the scales are still well and truly loaded. The imbalance of resources and the vagaries of ministerial transition heavily favour the energy barons whose horizons are limited to the boundaries of the energy market, and who naturally seek to increase energy demand, and to obtain the maximum share of it for their industry. They disadvantage those who seek to contain demand by the elimination of waste, and those who see energy as the solution to other environmental and social problems that cannot be for ever avoided.

How else can one explain the fact that the Treasury and Department of Energy look for far higher returns from energy conservation projects than in evaluating major new energy supply projects? What else can one understand from the fact that industry is aided to convert its boilers to burn coal, with which I thoroughly agree, but not to burn its waste materials? What else can it mean when the Government spend so much on social security payments in heating the homes of low-income families and so little on insulating those homes to make them more energy efficient? My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North spoke of the increase in rates when one harnesses wind energy to reinforce the energy supply to one's home.

This depth of the disadvantage for alternative energy and the extent to which it pervades the Government machine as a whole go a long way towards explaining why, for example, we have been so slow to develop combined heat and power in this country when it is so widely and efficiently used abroad, and has been for some time. The advantages accruing from combined heat and power, especially when combined with refuse burning, as used in some parts of the world, would cross the boundaries of different Departments. Therein lies another range of problems for us. Projects which cross departmental boundaries are notoriously difficult to fund, especially when new technologies are involved or when new ideas need to be implemented.

Energy Efficiency Year in 1986 is a great idea, but energy conservation will never be successful in Britain if it is the exclusive enthusiasm of the Department of Energy. It requires complete commitment by Government and all Departments — not merely lip service but commitment to action, not tomorrow but today. It involves all Departments in critically reviewing their own energy use, including energy efficiency as a high priority in their own building requirements, and in assessing their legislative and executive actions in the context of their impact on energy conservation generally. The rewards are considerable—indeed, much has been achieved—but, on any reckoning, much remains to be done.

Cost is a central and vital factor. I do not advocate any extension of subsidy for energy. On the contrary, I seek profitable and worthwhile investment. However, it is not unreasonable to expect in the public sector a fair assessment of cost to be based on sensible and consistent criteria, and to take all relevant factors into account — both long and short term. I referred to the inconsistent view of the pay-back period, which discriminates against conservation investment compared with energy supply projects. That thinking, which is by no means unique, illustrates the type of distorted financial vision which has so artificially and unnecessarily constrained CHP schemes in Britain to the limited and experimental processes that we have employed, while overseas the schemes are successful and established, especially in combination with the disposal of refuse.

Rubbish is all too renewable and expanding an energy source. Surely, therefore, any realistic appraisal of cost of CHP must include not just the costs of generating the heat and power and their distribution, but the savings in waste disposal in the long term, and the enhancement of the environment, which will be brought about by such a sensible development. Why, for example, should my constituents, who live on the periphery of Leeds and who for many years have endured the disruption of opencast mining at Gamblethorpe, now, when mining has come to an end, face many more years of distress while that hole in the ground is filled with rubbish? The rubbish should be producing heat and power.

We must rise above the blinkered short-term judgments that avoid long-term solutions until they are forced upon us. We shall eventually run out of suitable holes in the ground in which to dump our rubbish. The sensible course must be to plan for that now and adopt long-term solutions that will enhance our environment. That requires urgent co-ordination, not just between Departments, but between central and local government, so that coherent and comprehensive schemes may be suggested.

Our environment is important. Public demands for its protection grows, quite properly, ever stronger, and fuel demand for alternative energy sources. One of the benefits of alternative energy which the recent ETSU report highlighted is the fact that many of the projects assessed are environmentally benign, have negligible environmental impact or, in some cases, can provide solutions to other problems that affect our environment. The reports are a treasure trove of useful information about the valuable work sponsored by the Department and the criteria that it has used.

That is of particular interest to constituencies such as mine where the city and countryside meet—sometimes uneasily. We have just passed through the annual ritual in which sections of the media attack cereal farmers for straw burning when in reality they have little choice. The ETSU is sponsoring research to resolve that problem and I have an interest in a company investigating the possibility of using surplus straw as a feedstock for producing fertiliser. It is particularly gratifying, therefore, to see that the ETSU, in exercising a strategic overview of the matter, has identified the cost of transport of straw as a crucial limitation in developing commercial solutions, and is looking to promoting research into the economic compacting of straw to ease that limitation. If it is successful, it will open the door to processing biomass fuel on a much wider scale, and solve economically a significant environmental problem.

It is precisely because of that broad-ranging approach that alternative energy has created and nurtured a public and political awareness that the energy debate does not start and finish with coal, oil, gas and nuclear power—important though they are. It also demonstrates that in a modern technological society the Government have a crucial role to play in research and development — in developing strategies, in directing resources to promising projects, in bringing complementary programmes together, in acting as a catalyst, and in picking winners and, inevitably, losers, at least concerning public money and investment.

We cannot afford the scatter gun approach of the United States Government towards research and development. Nor should we, with our natural gift for inventiveness, confine ourselves to the laser-like concentration of Japan on limited areas of research. Our approach should be somewhere between the two. It is gratifying to see that the Government accept that responsibility.

It is notoriously difficult for Governments to pick winners, especially in the uncertain world of new technology, but that is no reason for not trying. Without such support and a measure of strategic direction, much of the research simply will not happen, and there will be no winners to pick.

The Alvey programme for information technology is a model for governmental participation in strategic research in an important commercial technology. The ETSU reports demonstrate the beginnings of a similar approach towards renewable energy, and should enjoy the fullest support of the House. I do not suggest for one moment that I envisage a practical scenario in which coal, gas, oil and nuclear power will not, in some proportions, continue to be the mainstay of our energy needs, but I believe that great sums of public money can be saved and better invested in the national and public interest if energy conservation and the development of alternative energy sources are assessed on a fair and comparable basis.

I commend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy for the progress which has been made and for the effort and commitment that they have demonstrated, but I am sure that they will be the first to agree that much still remains to be done.

12.20 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I apologise to the House and to the Under-Secretary of State for not being here for his opening speech. I understand that some of the points that I hoped he would make were not made. I have no doubt that he will deal with them in his winding-up speech.

There was much in the tone and content of the speech of the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) with which I agreed wholeheartedly. I have asked many questions about the progress of combined heat and power, which I had hoped might come to London's dockland where opportunities abound, but Government progress is disappointingly slow. It could be speeded up.

Ten years have passed since the great energy crisis of 1974. It produced a plethora of ideas and policies which the previous Labour Government began to sort out. Since then, however, there have been six years of relative lack of effort. I sympathise with the Under-Secretary of State. He is doing his best perhaps, but he is doing it in difficult circumstances, about which I should like to be provocative.

Let me deal with one of the excellent examples of the hon. Member for Elmet—the generation of electricity from rubbish. That is exactly what the Greater London council does at its Edmonton works. However, the generation of electricity from London's rubbish is possible only if that rubbish can be managed over a reasonably wider area. The Government did not allow that to happen in another place or in this place. Despite, therefore, the hon. Member for Elmet's generalities, I suspect that when the vote took place in this House he was not, in practice, in favour of the generation of electricity from London's rubbish. He will correct me if I am wrong, but I suspect that he voted against the continuation of a single authority —not necessarily the GLC—in London for the disposal of rubbish, let alone its generation into electricity. Conservative Members very often speak in generalities, whether or not they have an interest in the matter, which many of them have. In practice, however, they deny the means for the kind of progress which they say that they support.

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): Is it not true that this project could continue if the Labour boroughs in London decided to co-operate to keep the scheme in operation?

Mr. Spearing: I am dealing with the principle. That may happen, and it will probably have to happen. However, the hon. Gentleman must understand that the extension of schemes of that kind will not be easy to achieve with a fragmented pattern of local government in an area where regional organisation is needed. That applies not only to London but to the metropolitan counties.

Mr. Batiste: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that part of the problem over the development of combined heat and power, particularly in the context of burning rubbish, is that because the strategic authorities, like the

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metropolitan counties, were so big they had easy access to holes in the ground and adopted the easy option? If they had concentrated on solving the problems where they arose, there would have been much more rapid progress.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman says that the size of these authorities has given them an easy option. I do not agree that that is necessarily so. There was the opportunity to develop a coherent strategy if the authority wished it, and if the Government had wished it, too. I am not sure that the Government wished to develop such a strategy. I do not believe that the Government are interested in a coherent or alternative energy programme. These sources of power and energy supply are intrinsically alternatives. Although the debate has concentrated upon the alternatives —wind and wave energy, renewable resources and the burning of rubbish — we forget at our peril that all sources of energy in Britain, which has an abundance of different forms of energy saving and production, are alternatives.

The hon. Member for Elmet mentioned the lack of progress due to the entrenched interest of the market place. The Government are interested only in a market economy and they are trying to apply it to energy. The 19th century prototype Leeds school of non-political economy cannot and does not work. One cannot apply stone age economic principles to the needs of the present day. The Government are trying to do that in almost every area. That is why they are failing not only here but elsewhere.

Time is all-important in energy. Our coal and oil resources are being run down. A fundamental principle of the Leeds school of non-political economy is to work on the basis of annual profits. According to that philosophy, it is perfectly all right if large profits are made for one, two or even 10 years. One is getting a good return on one's investment. What happens after that does not matter. In other words, après moi, le deluge.

If we are concerned about alternative energy resources we must plan for posterity as well as for profits next year. The Government do not appear to take that view. The Leeds view is too short-sighted. Therefore the Government do not take time into account. Do they take cost into account? I doubt it. There is no integrated energy cost or pricing policy. That element is missing. The social impact element is also missing.

The choice between different forms of energy also has a social content. I am not referring just to acid rain, smog and the efficiency of rubbish disposal, all of which we must take into account. I am referring also to the impact upon communities where changes in the implementation of energy and pricing policies have a social impact. We know the view of the chairman of the NCB on carrying money over to avoid undue unemployment and damage to the social fabric of society.

The Government's school of non-political economy is incompatible with a reasonable, balanced and coherent approach to all the alternatives of energy supply. If they took such an approach, the pattern would be clear.

We are living in a fools' paradise as North sea oil rapidly runs out. The assumption in terms of the economy is that there are alternatives to follow. I shall leave that assumption aside, although it has been prevalent in our debates this week.

The assumption in terms of power is that atomic power will come through. It may do, but the atomic solution is only one of the alternatives. We must ensure that, when the choice is made, the alternatives are clear and are not distorted. That is where suspicion and debate arise over how the Government undertake their national responsibilities.

I shall not repeat the arguments about coal costing and the arguments in accountancy journals about the rundown of the alternatives to pits. That is not the centre of our debate, although it is relevant to what I have been saying, because there is widespread suspicion that the Government's approach was less than credible. They emphasise conflict and confrontation, and that is as true of energy policy as it is of almost everything else that they do.

Let us look at the more exotic alternatives that have been in the news for the past 10 years and at what the Government have done to ensure a proper evaluation of those systems. It is easy to say that windmills are not the answer, but if someone says that there may be a place for vertical axis wind generators that sounds more scientific. What is happening with vertical axis wind generators or any other wind generators?

About 10 years ago the CEGB published an interesting research document about wind speeds off the British coast. It revealed a tremendous potential for wind power, even in the Thames estuary where there were still some wartime forts. We have had 10 years to do something. What has been done, what is the state of the art, and what is the Government's view? The engineering department at Reading university was doing some interesting work about five years ago. Is that still in British hands?

I had an interesting exchange earlier with my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) about the fact that techniques for the generation of electricity from wave power have not been taken up by the United Kingdom in the Highlands of Scotland or on the Atlantic seaboard, but have been taken up, apparently with great success, by the Norwegians. Why? Why have our Government not grasped that winner?

The Minister said that we must invest in winners. Was not there a winner at Leicester university? Did not the economics of Leeds permit the development of the winner from Leicester? Perhaps the winner from Leicester fitted in with the economics of Leeds. Was there no patent? Were there no engineering companies in Britain scrambling for this marvellous device? If the Norwegians are right, what has happened to the Government's theories on economic exploitation?

The Minister will either have to say that the Norwegian device is no good or he will have to explain why his much-vaunted private enterprise "spot-the-winner" laissez-faire economy did not spot it here. The Minister must explain why, even if it was on the margin, the Government did not spot the development and keep it going.

Departmental Select Committees keep an eye on Ministers. The Select Committee on Energy in Session 1983-84 produced a report entitled "Energy Research Development and Demonstration in the United Kingdom". The Committee clearly was worried. Paragraph 65 of its report states:

"In practice, the Department presides over a disparate portfolio of RD & D programmes and projects, which have in

part been inherited and in part have been evolved, but which in total do not appear to reflect a coherent set of energy policy objectives."

An official reply has been made to that, but I should like it to be repeated today.

Paragraph 68 of the report states:

"The point is, however, that when the treatment of different aspects of energy RD & D is so glaringly inconsistent, it is difficult to be satisfied that a sensible balance of priorities has been arrived at."

Referring to the Advisory Council on Research and Development, the report states:

"However, if it is to perform these functions effectively the ETSU's—

that is, the energy technology support unit—

"spread of experience would have to be widened to include more specialists with non-nuclear backgrounds."

Two questions arise. Have more specialists with non-nuclear backgrounds been appointed to the energy technology support unit; and, if so, why were they not on it at the beginning? Secondly, it has been said outside that none of the members of ACORD is well placed or expert in the alternative technologies. If that is correct, why? If it is not correct, will the Minister tell us which members of ACORD are experts or experienced?

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) referred to wave power and ETSU activities at Harwell. I understand that the unit is run by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. It is under that umbrella administratively, and perhaps geographically, but is it technically?

The Minister seemed to imply earlier that, although the unit is at Harwell, its work is separate from the atomic work being done there and that it has a proper relationship to that work. I am told that most if not all of the people involved in the ETSU have had careers in the atomic industry. I do not say that atomic energy is not important. It certainly is, although it is controversial, but I should have expected people with career backgrounds, experience, friendships and knowledge in the wider energy industry to be involved. If that is so, we must ask ourselves whether the energy technology support unit personnel are properly balanced.

In the whole area of alternatives in energy, which is what we should be about, the Government's performance is unclear and incoherent. Many serious questions need to be answered. If we try to apply the Leeds school of non-political economy to something as basic as energy, which requires national intervention and planning for posterity and not profit, even at a national level, let alone that of the world, we cannot obtain a proper answer. During the past six years the Leeds school has attempted to get its philosophy interlarded with or imposed on an area that is not appropriate. Indeed, I doubt that it is appropriate in many areas. In national energy policy, especially the so-called alternatives, it is the least appropriate philosophy of all.

12.40 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, South): I have a long-standing engagement this afternoon, and apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister and the House for not being able to stay to listen to my hon. Friend's reply to the debate.

I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). I hope that he will find that some of my remarks are relevant to the points that he raised. I have long had an interest in alternative energy sources. As long ago as 1977 I was lucky enough to join a trip to the United States where I visited a number of installations using alternative energy. Even that many years ago I saw aerogenerators, solar power research and a plant that was burning rubbish to raise steam to produce electricity. The smell of the plant was truely unforgettable. However, just as memorable was the dedication of the scientists and engineers trying to find technical and economic solutions to the problems. I am equally impressed by the Government's diligence in trying to find solutions on both those fronts.

Before I turn to the inexhaustible sources of energy, I want to refer to energy efficiency, which the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) described as the fifth fuel. It is not exactly a fifth fuel, but given the possibility of using energy more efficiently rather than producing more energy and wasting it in consumption, that does stand as an alternative.

Not many hon. Members have mentioned something to which I believe tribute should be paid—the fact that the Government have begun to establish energy prices that are realistic and market related, and which are the essential background to the efficient use of energy. Sensible energy prices are also the essential background to the development of alternative energy sources. If the conventional energy sources are not priced at market and realistic rates, the alternative sources will have no chance of competing against them.

The most important element both in the development of alternative energy and in energy efficiency is the operation of the free market. However, I am prepared to admit that the Government have a proper role in promoting energy efficiency. I can explain that under four headings. First, the Government, at both local and national level, own a tremendous estate of buildings in which energy is consumed — for example, schools, office buildings, hospitals and universities. Therefore, the Government must be as concerned to use energy efficiently in those buildings, as they are concerned to spend taxpayers' and ratepayers' money efficiently in other areas.

Secondly, the Government are in a good position to recognise the danger of returning to dependence on energy imports. They recognise that the greater the pressure on energy supplies, the faster energy prices will rise and the greater will be the danger of a return to recession.

Thirdly, in the help that we provide to poor domestic consumers, energy efficiency means providing help that relieves poverty in a more cost-effective manner than any other means of disbursing money to them, such as through higher social security payments or other transfer payments.

Fourthly, the Government must be concerned with energy efficiency because of the impact of that on industry. If industry is more efficient in using its energy, that can help to boost GNP and produce jobs, and they are legitimate concerns of the Government. I therefore commend the Government for everything that they have done in that sphere, although I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) that we are still left with the problem that it is much easier to justify investment in new supply energy than in saving energy. One must make a strictly economic comparison between whether a pound spent on saving energy can save more energy than the same pound spent on producing more energy.

I said at the outset that I had taken a long interest in the subject and felt a certain enthusiasm for it. The subject is a natural magnet for attracting ideas. We can enjoy

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imagining a time when our energy sources would be as inexhaustible as the sun, wind and waves. We should like to dream of power stations that emitted no radioactivity, no waste and no smoke, and of energy sources that were completely invulnerable to Arab boycotts or miners' strikes.

Idealism is not enough, and I commend the Minister for recognising that. He is concerned with spending taxpayers' money and has decided, rightly in my view, that he must look to spend that money effectively and wisely and is taking the advice of ACORD in doing that.

The Minister has, rightly, divided the alternative energy sources into the three categories to which he referred—the economically attractive, the promising but uncertain and the long shots—and I commend him on that because it would have been easy for him to have tried to satisfy everybody by spreading the money thinly, trying to cover every area of alternative energy development. To do that would have been wrong.

Nevertheless, I do not believe that we can get far in developing new alternative energy using only Government money. At some stage there will have to be commercial interest in the matter. Because energy prices are now relatively low, that commercial interest is limited. As the *New Scientist* said in an article on 11 July:

"The sad fact is that the economics just aren't right for a massive foray into renewable energy."

I am concerned because, at a time when commercial incentive is weak, the Government are spending a great deal of taxpayers' money, as it were, against the grain of market forces. The Government may argue that they are there to spend against the grain of market forces and to keep momentum going when the price structure is not right. I hope that means that when energy prices rise and commercial interest is, therefore, that much stronger, the Government will reduce the amount of commitment of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Bruce: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the Government are giving £400 million a year in fuel subsidies, which is about four times what it was four years ago, and that some of that money would be better invested in insulation and conservation projects? That would give a return to the Government, being the public sector. It would ensure that people were not only getting a real benefit in extra comfort but that the nation benefited from energy efficiency, rather than pouring money down the drain to consume energy inefficiently.

Mr. Portillo: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and the point he makes echoes what I said earlier about one having to view in economic terms what the Government can do in terms of energy efficiency. It may be that they can spend money most efficiently in relieving poverty by helping people to use less energy in their homes.

I was worried slightly when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who is for the moment not in his place, said that his programme was to back winners. I understand that he was referring to the need to consider the prospects within the alternative energy area that are the most promising, but the expression "to back winners" is one that is not especially fashionable within the Government at present. Some Departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry would not use the phrase at all at the moment. However, my hon. Friend is not a slave to fashion. He has used the phrase more than once and he obviously uses it deliberately and bravely.

We may be able to identify the projects that are the most promising now but it is quite a different matter from identifying those that will make it to the finishing post. We have heard this morning that over the years we have invested £16 million in wave research, yet it is now regarded as one of the long shots. For the moment, it has virtually been stamped "Reject". There are other alternative energy sources, such as wind power and geothermal hot dry rocks, that are considered the flavours of the month, but I ask my hon. Friend to recognise that in due course these sources may not reach the winning post and may also be regarded as long shots, just as wave energy is today.

Dr. M. S. Miller: I wish to take up the hon. Gentleman's reference to the phrase, "to back winners". Is he aware that one of the most successful energy-producing companies in the world, General Electric of the United States, has placed a sign on its headquarters which states, in effect, "We do not want to be first; we want to be second and the best."

Mr. Portillo: I am slightly puzzled as I am not exactly sure of the point that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make to me. I think that there is a difference between Governments who spend taxpayers' money and companies that spend shareholders' money. Companies are accountable directly to their shareholders. I may have misunderstood the hon. Gentleman.

I do not wish to carp about what the Government have done. They have rightly tried to identify which of the alternative sources of energy are the most promising for the moment. I concur with the conclusion reached in an article that appeared in the *New Scientist* that there is not much to be lost by jumping off the waves and into wind energy.

An alternative source of energy which has not been mentioned so far to my knowledge is thermonuclear fusion. The House will be aware of the remarkable maiden speech that was made in another place by Lord Marshall of Goring on that subject. Fusion is an exciting alternative source of energy, like many others. However, Lord Marshall took us through the many technical barriers that will have to be overcome one by one if fusion is ever to become a reality as a power-producing source in Britain. If it is ever to reach the stage when the amount of energy that we extract from a fusion machine is greater than the amount of energy that we need to put into it in the first place, there will have to be a tremendous commitment. He explained that when we have surmounted all the technical hurdles we shall face the economic hurdle, which is that of producing power that is economic and competitive with other power sources. Lord Marshall concluded that it was his present judgment that we would surmount the technical barriers one by one but not the economic barrier because of the complexity of the technology involved.

The remarkable maiden speech of Lord Marshall concluded with his saying that he wished that reality would temper our enthusiasm for thermonuclear fusion. I think that that advice applies broadly across the range of alternative energy sources. We are dealing with exciting technologies that require much imagination, and a tremendous amount of effort has been put into them. It is

understandable that we are all enthusiastic and possibly idealistic about them, but, at the end of the day, they will have to prove economic. For that reason, I join with Lord Marshall in saying that it is appropriate that while we are enthusiastic we should be extremely cautious.

Mr. Eadie: Is the hon. Member not aware that a Labour Government were responsible for the nuclear fusion project coming to Culham and that it is a joint European project? Surely he is not arguing that we should abandon nuclear fusion, even at the expense of not having technical collaboration with our European partners?

Mr. Portillo: I would be concerned if the hon. Gentleman thought that I was implying that Lord Marshall was saying that we should abandon nuclear fusion. Lord Marshall was not saying that. He was saying simply that one must be realistic about the prospects and that his best present judgment is that nuclear fusion will never overcome the economic hurdle. My knowledge of nuclear fusion does not compare to that of Lord Marshall, and I restrict myself to putting Lord Marshall's point, which he made so eloquently to the other place, to the House. It is worthy of broader application.

12.55 pm

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): I commend the hon. Member for Enfield, South (Mr. Portillo) for his words about Lord Marshall, the chairman of the CEGB, an eminent and distinguished energy scientist. If my memory serves me right, Lord Marshall has not always been so pessimistic about the possibility of fusion. I may be doing him an injustice, but I have a feeling that some years ago, while he was not saying that we would get quick returns from fusion, he was not so pessimistic about something developing, perhaps in the middle of the next century. That is not long in the lifetime of a country, although it is for me.

We have to inject some science into a debate such as this, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) will do so, because he is a scientist. We should not get carried away on the winds and the waves of imagination which will lead only to marginal developments at best, certainly within the near future. We need alternative sources of energy. All methods of producing electricity should be investigated, but some of them will, at best, have only a marginal effect. For example, this country will never produce enough solar energy to make an enormous contribution to our energy requirements, although it might make a little. I am all in favour of the conservation of energy. It is essential, even from the point of view of finance.

The Government have to look at this in the reality of today's situation. To go in for experimentation when there are methods that are proved, cheap, clean and effective would be wrong. We have not the time to do that, even if we wanted to. We may have had time before, but no longer, as our competitors will be producing electrical power far cheaper than we are, and we shall have to do the same.

It is not just a question of which are the best methods of producing energy and electrical power. Coal is a good method and has stood us well, as have oil and gas. However, we know that the sources are finite and will give out soon. Therefore, we have to be involved in other methods of producing energy. Once coal, oil and gas give out, we shall never have them again, and if other alternative methods are chasing what I have to call will-o'-the-wisps, we shall have to use the proved method of nuclear energy. I am all in favour of using rubbish, but the trouble is that one often needs more energy to produce power from rubbish than one gains. Extra equipment is needed to burn rubbish in the quantities required.

I have been interested for several years in the disposal of radioactive nuclear waste. Britain is way behind its major industrial competitors. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was disparaging about the amount of money that was spent on producing energy and electricity by nuclear means. England produces only 17 per cent. of its electricity from nuclear energy, compared with 50 per cent. in Scotland. Scotland has always been at the forefront of scientific advancement and these figures show how badly England is doing. That 17 per cent. compares with 48·4 per cent. in France, 45·9 per cent. in Belgium and 37 per cent. in Sweden, to say nothing of the United States and Japan. We are not even keeping pace with these other European countries in the production of electrical power.

I am not against coal production. As Mr. Michael McGahey is on record as saying, the last thing that we should want to do with coal is burn it. We should be extracting from coal all the wonderful materials available from it, including chemicals.

Coal-fired power stations stood us in good stead, but at enormous cost. The ash produced from coal is radioactive. The various acids that are released into the air from coal and oil are extremely dangerous. It is difficult to assess the damage that has been caused to human beings and the ecology. This was not the fault of the coal miners or of Governments—we used the only method of producing energy that we had. Other methods now supersede it. Coal still has its place, if it can be used at 80 per cent. or 90 per cent. efficiency rather than 25 per cent. or 30 per cent. I know of no method that has been devised to produce that efficiency, but it must be found because Britain in particular has large supplies of coal.

We make our choice and we go ahead with it. There is a tremendously long lead time between the commissioning of any type of power station, especially nuclear, and production. We have heard about the dangers from radioactivity, but I wonder whether those who are concerned realise that radioactivity is all around us. There is enough uranium in the oceans to run every nuclear reactor in the world today for 300 years. The presence of this uranium is not unusual. It has been with us since the sun first came up and it will be with us until it goes down permanently, which is a very long time away. The Government must decide what to do in energy production. They do not have a great deal of time to decide. Once they make their choice they should stick to it and get on with the job.

1.4 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I should like to start by addressing a few remarks to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) because he invited me to make a few comments on fusion. I am sorry that Lord Marshall in another place should have been pessimistic about the future for fusion, because it gives us our brightest hope for electricity generation.

We can have a fusion process, rather than a fission process, where, by persuading two atoms to collide and

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stick together, we can generate electricity. The only by-product will be helium—one of the safest gases we know, because it is not inflammable—which is used in air balloons because it is so safe. That gives us a vision for the future that we should never disregard.

I was speaking recently to the director of the European fusion project. I asked him whether the process would eventually work. He said that it was a matter not of if but when. When I questioned him further on the "when", he admitted that it would be 40 to 50 years from now. At least it gives us a vision of cheap and safe energy in the future.

I welcome the debate and the Government's interest in alternative energy and renewable sources. I was pleased to learn this morning the extent of Government funding. I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, who is not present in the House at the moment, on a comprehensive review of all alternative and renewable sources. However, there was one omission from his remarks to which I shall return later. I hope that he will put that right when he replies. We talk about alternative sources of energy—alternative to what? We have used wood as a source of energy for thousands of years. We have used coal for hundreds of years. We have used other hydrocarbons, such as oil and gas, for only tens of years. We can see from past energy sources that each new one gives us less scope than the one it replaces.

The total availability of hydrocarbon fuels is rapidly declining. I agree with the hon. Member for East Kilbride that we must conserve hydrocarbon fuels. They are far too precious to burn. They have premium uses. They can be used for making plastics, as chemical industry feedstock and for fertiliser manufacture. They must be conserved to enable us to have aviation. We can move towards an electrical society, but we cannot yet think of having electrically-driven aircraft. There are intermediate ways of achieving that. We can use electricity to electrolyse water and use the hydrogen as a fuel for aircraft, but that is a long way off and very expensive. We must conserve our hydrocarbons for aviation, chemicals and feedstocks.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman is making a good speech. Is he aware that many of the aeroplanes that came to this country during the last war and knocked hell out of London, Clydebank and Coventry, were fuelled by aviation spirit produced from coal?

Dr. Clark: Yes, I am aware of that. The Germans developed that process. The South Africans, the Americans and this country are doing the same now. My point has been endorsed by the hon. Gentleman. He is reinforcing the fact that hydrocarbons must be conserved to turn into fuel later rather than be used at present in a short-term process. I thank him for his comments.

The hydrocarbon fuels are coming to an end. We shall find that the alternatives are less convenient, more expensive and economically less attractive. Some will be controversial. We need to find an alternative series of fuels that will last longer than some of the fuels that we used at the end of the last century and are using this century.

Let us consider some of the alternatives. They have already been reviewed this morning so I shall not dwell on them at length. Let us look quickly at solar energy. It has abundant local and specific uses. The only power station of that type that I know is in Italy, where 727 mirrors are used to focus the sun's beams on to a heat source and generate the steam to drive a turbine. The output from that power station is 1MW, not much more than two or three windmills and only one thousandth of the power from a conventional coal or nuclear power station. The power station may help the Italians to drive their air conditioning in the summer when the sun is abundant, but it will do little good in helping northern Italians to have heating in their houses in winter when there is not so much sun. Despite all the admirable uses of solar energy, I suspect that we in this country will not be able to use it to a great extent because we shall have the sun, if any, only in the summer, and we need our heat in the winter.

There is a similar problem with biomass. It is marvellous that we can get fuel by using the sun's rays to grow vegetation and burn it or degrade it in such a way as to get gas from it. We are doing that to some extent. However, again, it will be only a small contribution to our overall energy needs.

I turn from the sun, which is rare in this country, to elements of which we have plenty—wind and water. I recently visited the large British Aerospace windmill at Burgar hill in the Orkneys. When I visited the site, the windmill was just ticking round, generating no electricity because it was not going fast enough. It had been kept going because the people were frightened that if they stopped it, it would not turn again for us to see. We were at the northern tip of these islands in July, seeing a windmill that could generate electricity, but could not do so because there was no wind. Ironically, when we flew back to Hatfield airfield the wind was so strong that we could barely get down from the aircraft. When we stepped out we had to be helped down by the people waiting for us, bundled into cars and driven off. That illustrates the vagaries of alternative power from wind, yet it is a marvellous supplement and complement to other sources. However, in itself it will not solve our energy problems.

I am delighted that Howdens, which has a windmill on that site, too, has been able to get export orders, and has sold 10 to California. I am sure that it will sell many more across the world. I agree that we should perservere with wind energy not only for our own use but because it can be a significant contribution to the Third world and developing countries with no other source of energy, where they do not have the infrastructure to allow them to have the transmission lines that we are used to seeing in western Europe. They can have windmills local to demand. I am sure that in that way we can make a contribution to their well-being.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) mentioned that Denmark has 1,500 windmills, which would produce 0·4 per cent. of Denmark's electricity requirement. If the Danes are to produce anything like a significant percentage of their energy from wind, imagine the number of windmills that will be required. It is estimated that if we had windmills in this country of 60 m diameter with a significant output of 3 MW, we would need about 10,000 scattered across the country to provide us with half our electricity needs.

Many environmentalists will say that windmills are a good form of energy because they do not disturb the landscape. However, how many of those same environmentalists would be happy if every beauty spot and high peak had three or four windmills located at the very top? Every prominent area would have three or four

windmills of 60 m diameter. Those people would be just as concerned about that as about a conventional power station tucked away in a remote part of the country.

Other hon. Members have referred to wave power, so I shall refer only briefly to it. My hon. Friend the Minister and others have said that we are not pursuing research into the contribution to be made by wave power. If half of our electricity came from wave power, we would require a wave barrage, most likely on the west coast of Scotland, comprising 600 miles of wave machines. That is environmentally unacceptable. Even 10 per cent of our electricity needs would require 100 miles of wave machines.

The Bondi and the Wimpey-Atkins barrage on the Severn have been mentioned. The latter is an admirable scheme, and I should like to support it. I hope that it is eventually built, but we should get the matter into perspective. It will generate about 1 per cent. of the country's needs. It will indeed supply one sixth of the electricity required in Wales, but that is only a small part of Britain's needs.

One of the most interesting installations that I have seen in the past year is the Dinorwic pump storage station in north Wales. We can be proud of it. Water is pumped from the bottom of the hill to the top at night when electricity is cheap and plentiful, and it then goes through reversible turbines driving the generator when it cascades back down. It has a capacity of 1,700 MW—about 1·5 times that of a conventional power station. At Dinorwic we are turning the power of water to advantage, as it can go from zero generation to 1,300 MW in 10 seconds—something a Jaguar would be proud of. That means that the station can meet a surge in demand in a mere 10 seconds and that conventional power stations do not need to idle using valuable hydrocarbon fuel. Moreover, that capacity avoids the need to build an extra conventional power station.

All of those schemes are to be applauded, but to what extent will renewable sources provide us with energy? This is the admission that my hon. Friend the Minister made. He did not quantify output now or in the forseeable future. He said that solar energy will provide real savings, that biomass is attractive, that wind energy is promising, that hot dry rocks have potential, that tidal energy is a substantial resource and that hydro-electricity could be used on a large scale. They are all words—he gave us no figures. If my hon. Friend catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that he will quantify the amount of electricity that he believes we can get from renewable sources. I hazard a guess that it is between 10 and 20 per cent. on the most optimistic forecast. I doubt whether it is 10 per cent. now and it will not be 20 per cent. until half way through the next century. Although renewable sources must be exploited, we cannot rely on them.

The world population will double in the next 50 years and energy demands will increase 2·5 times, so it is essential that we find an alternative fuel. I believe that that alternative fuel is uranium. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for East Kilbride. Uranium is plentiful and has no other commercial value. Moreover, we have enough to last us many decades, if not two or three centuries. Nuclear generation is one of the safest forms of electricity generation. It is environmentally less obtrusive than many other forms of generation, and at present it is the cheapest form of electricity. Nuclear generation using natural uranium as a fuel for nuclear power stations also has the bonus that we are creating a fuel for the fast breeder reactor when in future that comes on stream. We already have enough spent fuel from our conventional nuclear power stations to provide electricity for Britain for 300 years if that spent fuel is used in a fast breeder reactor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) said that nuclear waste was dangerous and that it could kill people. He explained that it was dangerous if people roll in it. Cyanide and many other chemicals and materials are dangerous if one rolls in them. Indeed, even sand is dangerous if people roll in it and lie face down on it for too long. We must keep a sense of proportion on the nuclear issue.

In conclusion, it is right to conserve our energy as much as possible, to use storage such as we and the Norwegians have developed and are developing. It is essential to have renewables as far as possible. It cannot be denied that they have specific and localised use. We must continue to develop other forms of energy for the future. We must put most effort into nuclear energy so that following generations will not be deprived of hydrocarbon fuels, which are so essential to modern life and the well-being of the world.

1.21 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): It is always a relief that much remains to be said, even after sitting patiently through four hours of debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on his sheer persistence, which has not been unrelated to the fact that we are having this debate today. I, too, come from the west country, and I am glad to say that in Salisbury we have more sun and less rain than he has in Devonshire. The people of Salisbury have been aware of the power of the sun for 760 years. In about 1220 they applied to the Pope for permission to move the cathedral because the sun was dazzling them while they worshipped.

I thank the Secretary of State for agreeing to the debate and the Ministers for being present. It is encouraging to see two Energy Ministers present. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy stressed the importance of flexibility, diversity, economy and efficiency. He said that while he was in Japan he was asked why the United Kingdom had such a substantial investment programme in renewables. His answer was that investment in the future was a key element in United Kingdom energy strategy. I hope that I shall show him an additional Key element in my speech.

First, the Department of Trade and Industry is investigating photovoltaic cells, because of their export potential. There is a hiccup in our energy strategy which, if cured, could lead to great benefit accruing to British export industries and our overseas aid programme.

Alternative energy technology has been embraced by many of our most prestigious companies and institutions — for example, McAlpine Taylor Woodrow, James Howden, the National Engineering Laboratory, and the Central Electricity Generating Board — but many of them are in receipt of Department of Energy grants, and I sometimes suspect that they do not wish to ruffle Whitehall's feathers. What worries them is that the Department of Energy will consider only the big projects, around 1,000 MW, and has chosen, quite legitimately, to have little or nothing to do with small projects around the 10 MW range. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that schizophrenia has set in at the Department of Energy. The energy efficiency campaign, masterminded by my right

[Mr. Robert Key]

hon. Friend the Secretary of State, has been universally acclaimed, and will be marvellously successful. The part of the Department which is responsible for that is humming with activity.

On the other hand, the energy generation side of the Department of Energy is a little dull. There are vast opportunities for United Kingdom exports of small-scale generation technology in the range 100 kW to 10 MW. Half the world's population requires energy at that level. The Department of Energy is denying support to the United Kingdom industry for small-scale projects to get the prototype demonstrations that are required for export purposes.

The Department of Trade and Industry is fulfilling that role to some extent, but it does not have the Department of Energy's expertise. The Department of Trade and Industry has had its successes. It supported the Orkney scheme of James Howden of Glasgow. During the past 18 months that company has sold 10 generators overseas. However, all this bypassed the Department of Energy.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) referred to the Norwegian wave energy project. I, too, regret the United Kingdom's withdrawal from wave energy research, because it has reached an advanced stage at East Kilbride in the National Engineering Laboratory and Coventry, at Lanchester polytechnic, which has a consortium of companies ready to go ahead, given a little help with funding. The Norwegian companies have been successful in building 500 KW generators, two of them for £800,000. But this is "too small" in Department of Energy terms.

What is the role of the Central Electricity Generating Board? I suspect that it, not the Government, gives the thumbs down to alternative energy schemes. There is no way in which a prototype demonstration can be cost-effective.

As for photovoltaic cells, the Under-Secretary of State said that the Department of Trade and Industry supports companies with a view to realising export potential. But why is the Department of Energy not interested in the development of amorphous silicon systems, such as those developed at Dundee and Herriot-Watt universities? They have a real export potential.

I was in Japan at the same time as the Minister. I visited Mr. Iwe, the president of Sanyo. He showed me round his solar house in Osaka. This is a massively expensive capital project which has largely been designed as a research base. It is completely reliant upon solar energy. I visited Osaka with Mr. Steve Wozniak, the founder of Apple computers, who had also evaluated a "total reliance" scheme for his home in California but had turned it down. Nobody is seriously suggesting total dependence upon alternative energy. In simple, pragmatic terms, we are looking, as the Minister said, at flexibility and diversity.

The practical problems facing local authorities need to be taken into account. I pay tribute to the Wiltshire county council architect, Mr. Haynes, who for some years has been seeking to develop an energy policy. Some of the most effective measures are the most simple, such as new buildings with proper draught exclusion systems and cavity wall insulation. The county council has examined the use of straw for heating. It has visited Denmark and Germany but has found that this is not economic. In response to the possible use of straw for heating, farmers have put up the price of straw.

Domestic rubbish is being burned in the cement works at Westbury. The county council is evaluating conservation measures, including double glazing and cavity walls. The pay-back on double glazing is 15 years and on cavity wall insulation four years. If county councils can build that into their building programmes it is useful. County councils will probably believe that they can save on static measures but that people on site cannot be controlled. That is one of the biggest sources of wasted energy. People leave doors and windows open in offices and schools and a kindly caretaker will probably increase the heating, if it gets a little chilly, by putting up the thermostat.

I pay tribute also to commercial undertakings such as Endless Holdings in my Salisbury constituency. It has developed such successful energy management systems for large buildings that it now operates in New York and Hawaii as well as in Salisbury. How appropriate that its headquarters in Salisbury is situated in one of our oldest medieval streets, Endless street.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) was right to mention wind generators as a potential project for our aid programme. As I said, half the world's population needs small-scale energy generation and the Danes have developed the Vesta wind turbines. Since they were designed seven years ago, production has reached 10 a day, at £30,000 each and 80 per cent. of them go for export.

It is time that the Department of Energy, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Overseas Development Administration started working much more closely. I bear in mind particularly the report on the science budget published at the end of July by the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts and I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that there is a severe squeeze on the research councils and the universities. Our competitors are increasing their spending and in Japan the proportion of gross national product spent on research will soon rise to 3 per cent.

There is one area where this country has egg on its face, Eigg, the island off Scotland, was to have been the site of an exciting scheme sponsored by the United Nations and managed by the university of Strathclyde. I understand that the project has fallen through and I urge the Minister to look at the problem urgently.

That is the new key element that I mentioned earlier. The Eigg project was overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture, which, understandably, has no energy commitment. To its credit, the Ministry approached the ODA which, equally understandably, questioned whether aid money should be spent on Eigg.

The energy studies unit at Strathclyde university is involved in a project with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and the United Nations development programme to evaluate the possibilities of renewable energy for farms and rural communities in Europe. It seeks to define economically viable technical solutions to meet energy demands in farms and rural communities from renewable sources and to identify combinations of technologies that give the best economic and operational results. It also seeks to define the barriers that hamper the diffusion of renewable energy systems in agricultural and rural communities.

The FAO-UNDP project was started only at the beginning of this year, after a two-year study. The countries involved are seven less-developed countries—

Czechoslovakia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Yugoslavia and six more highly developed countries—Finland, France, Israel, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The ultimate goal of the project is to commit the rural communities of those countries to reduce their dependence on external energy supplies, which are often transported great distances at great cost and carry subsidies, either implicit or explicit, because the rural area is charged the same price for its energy as the urban area. It is intended to demonstrate that the use of locally developed energy resources can reduce the production costs of agricultural commodities and increase farm profits.

For each participating country, an analysis has been made of individual technologies that are both technically and economically capable of supplying energy requirements in agriculture and villages.

The most rational combination of technologies for reducing the external energy consumption, depending on the individual requirements, is the goal of the analysis. In order to realise the aims, three steps were adopted. First, demonstration sites had to be found. Secondly a methodology was defined to analyse the energy requirements of the sites and, thirdly, a computer model was made to simulate the renewable energy systems and calculate the optimum combination of plant sizes.

The first two steps have been completed for the 10 participating countries. The sites have been selected, the energy demand curves have been measured and the locally available renewable energies have been identified. The next step is to define the optimum integrated energy systems and carry out installation in each country.

Work on that last part of the project has only recently started in earnest. Data are being collected on the positive and negative factors that affect the acceptance of renewable energy at farm level. Those factors include legislation, subsidies, and an infrastructure of maintenance, such as the existence of companies manufacturing appropriate plants.

The project is co-ordinated by the university of Milan, which carries out all the data collection and computer model work. Strathclyde university's energy studies unit is responsible for overseeing the computer modelling work and the data collection techniques.

Unless we manage to find funding to start a United Kingdom demonstration site, our involvement will be terminated by FAO and UNDP. That would be tragic. Demonstration site technology includes gasifiers for wood and crop residues, solar ponds, heat pumps, aerogenerators and windmills, biogas digesters and solar collectors for crop drying.

The energy produced from those sources is used for grain drying and vegetable drying, wood chip drying, milking, space heating, greenhouses, stables, hot water, lighting, water pumping and distilling as well as basic electricity generation. This is just the type of international collaboration in which we should be involved.

I congratulate the Minister on his enthusiasm and leadership, but we want him to do more. He has our full support. Please will he have another look at his Department's attitude to small-scale projects that can be of enormous benefit to ourselves in our urban communities through passive energy design, in our rural communities through increasing use of on-site supplementary energy, and in response to the strength of feeling that we must do more to aid the development of the Third world?

1.37 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): When it was announced that we were due to have today's debate, I am sure that many thought that it would be a debate for the echo freaks and the friends of the foxgloves, that we would look back on a land with windmills at which we could all tilt and that we should be lounging on our green Benches dreaming of the countryside. That could not be further from the truth, as the Minister made plain in his spirited defence of the Government.

The Minister set the tone for the debate. We are looking not backwards but at the frontiers of modern technologies. When we discuss alternative energy and renewables, we are trying to harness and use skilfully the lessons of higher and nuclear physics, chemistry and technology and to use to the best of our ability our natural resources. We are talking about a new subject and I am pleased that we have been able to have such a good debate.

It is inevitable that politicians should have to grapple with today's problems. That is our role. We tend to put off tomorrow's problems for tomorrow's generation. At best, we leave the alternatives and subjects connected with the forefront of technology to the academics and scientists.

We have discussed renewable energy in two dimensions or timescales. The Minister spoke of trying to use and generate renewable energy to deal with the problems of today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. However, we should constantly bear in mind the other problems that will emerge in 20 or even 50 years from now. I am certain that many of the projects which we reject today will be developed in the years ahead.

There are difficulties because Governments have to deal with budgets and rates of return. The Minister repeatedly made it plain that he is looking for the most cost-effective way of using energy. Although that may seem attractive, when trying to look far ahead it is difficult to be absolutely certain that the accounting system of today will also be the accounting system of tomorrow.

There is a great divide between Opposition Members and Conservative Members. Although we agree with much of what has been said today, we do not believe that a cash value can be put on every judgment. The Government should take other aspects into consideration when deciding which of the alternative forms of energy to back.

We would not have been seriously discussing the subject today had there not been an oil price hike in the mid-1970s. As the Minister said, he had to look at a programme that had been developing for 10 years, and which was aimed to come to fruition in the mid-1980s. It has done so, and he has taken decis for the second advance of the programme.

The Minister, rightly and not surprisingly, pointed out that the Government had increased spending on renewables. Using a five-year block involved a little sleight of hand, but it was convenient and suited the Minister. I do not quibble about the figures that he used; they were accurate. However, it was not the best way to present them. He should have adopted the same manner that he used on 13 June in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), when he gave a breakdown of the Government's reports over the past 10 years for each broad band of renewables.

Those detailed figures show a slightly different picture from the broad global figure that he used today to defend the Government's record. Even his broad global figure of

[Dr. David Clark]

£14 million to be spent in the current year is considerably less than the figures for 1981-82 and 1982-83. If analysed in detail, the position is alarming. That is why his hon. Friends were critical of some aspects of the Government's approach to renewables.

The figures show that the amount spent on wave power research has fallen from £1 million in 1983-84 to £400,000 in 1984-85. That really means the end of support. Expenditure on geothermal aquifers has fallen from £1·8 million to £1·1 million; on solar power it has fallen from £900,000 to £500,000. As many hon. Members have said today, research on solar power should go ahead as fast as possible, not only for our benefit and that of the good citizens of Salisbury, where apparently the sun is always shining, but as an effective way to give overseas aid to underdeveloped countries. I suspect that many Conservative Members agree with the Opposition on that point. Indeed, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) mentioned that.

Expenditure on biomass fell from £300,000 to £200,000. The Minister will say that there have been increases, and there have. They have occurred primarily in two areas: in wind, where expenditure has increased from £2·5 million to £4·8 million, and in geothermal hot dry rocks — principally the Camborne experiment — where expenditure has gone up from £2·9 million to £4·6 million.

The Minister said that they had been identified as winners. We are worried lest they are being developed at the cost of the remainder. Decisions seem to have been made too early. Rather than increasing just those two and reducing the others to compensate, it would have been better to increase expenditure on the two winners while maintaining research work on the others as well.

Short-sighted gains and immediate advances have been the main determinants in the Government's judgment. When we examine the matter in the long term, I am not sure that the decisions that the Government have taken will prove to have been wise.

My hon. Friends and I are keen to support all the efforts that are being made, and I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). He will agree that, while we do not want to see windmills on the top of every hill, there are places where useful windmills can be established.

Dr. Michael Clark: The hon. Gentleman will agree that windmills could be established, for example, offshore, where they would not cause any environmental upset, yet we would achieve the same generation near to urban areas.

Dr. David Clark: I am not sure that the fishermen of my constituency would agree with the hon. Gentleman. Rarely does one get something for nothing. A cost must be paid, even for renewables. However, in the Orkneys, at Ilfracombe and in Carmarthen bay windmills are functioning effectively.

Why does there seem to be a mood, in particular in the CEGB, to favour overseas designs and installations? I understand, for example, that the 200 kW machine owned by the CEGB at Carmarthen bay, which has been in service for two years, has run into problems, including trouble with the control system and cracks in the blade sparts. I understood that the machine was a proven United States design and was chosen in preference to a United Kingdom machine with a good record.

Parliament would be interested to know the thesis behind the decision to purchase that equipment, in view of the troubles that have occurred with it. As I say, there is a suspicion, I hope not born simply of jingoism, that there is a tendency to think that anything built overseas must be better than anything built in this country.

When I visit other countries I find, for example, that in pollution technology much of the equipment has been produced in this country. Almost all machinery concerned with coal — one need only think of coal pulverisation and the like — is manufactured in Britain. We have a tendency to undersell British industry.

Nowhere could that be more true than in relation to wave power. I do not apologise for returning to that issue because every hon. Member who has taken part in the debate has talked of wave power and agreed that the Government's decision has been wrong. The Minister shakes his head, but I had the feeling that it was the clear wish of those who participated in the debate that the Minister should reconsider the issue. I hope that he will give us an assurance that he will monitor closely that which takes place in Norway. If there is an inkling of evidence that his figures are wrong, I hope that he will do what he can to resuscitate the programme. I speak as someone from South Shields when I say that just across the sea in Norway, at Toftestallen, there is an oscillating wave column machine that is due to go into production on 13 November which will put electricity into the Norwegian grid. It is ironic that that should be done at the very time when we have, in effect, scrapped our wave power research programme.

Another worrying feature is that the machine in Norway, which will go on stream within the next few weeks, was devised and invented in the United Kingdom. It was developed by Professor Wells at Queen's university, Belfast. What has happened with the wave generating machine in Norway has happened all too often with British industry. The result is that hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost by the failure of Governments and industry to capitalise on their research and development capability.

There is a dispute about figures and the Minister says that wave power is being phased out because the experts have estimated that the cost per kW hour will be between 9p and 15p. We shall be able to see in 12 months or two years whether the Norwegians' claims are right. The installation at Toftestallen has taken 10 years to develop and the decision has not been taken lightly. the Norwegians are skilled business men and very good assessors and they have been prepared to face high construction costs. They claim that they can produce electricity from the installation at 3·4p per kW hour.

The Norwegian Government have supported the project even though the average cost of electricity from the vast hydro network in Norway is only 2·7p per kW hour. It is no use the Minister saying that it is easier for the Norwegians to implement the development because of the topography of their country. When I first made inquiries of the experts, I was told that the reason for the different estimates of cost per kW hour was that of tidal differences. I am assured by energy experts that that is not so. Dr. Peter White, of Manchester polytechnic, is on record as saying:

"For the Wells generator"—

that is the one that will operate in Norway—

"all you need is a cliff, deep water and a smooth bottom, and that is not uncommon."

I suggest that that sort of territory is not confined to the eastern side of the North sea. We have that sort of topography on the western side, especially in Scotland. I think that we have missed a great opportunity. I hope that the Minister will give us an assurance that he will monitor the Norwegian development and that if there are any signs of error on our part we shall put the process into reverse immediately and start pumping up the wave power programme.

Mr. Bruce: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman or the Minister will be able to clarify the complaints of those who are involved in the wave power programme. They claim that the method of calculation has been to average the worst and the best, and has therefore produced a much higher estimate of cost than is realistic and much higher figures than the industry thinks are obtainable. That is one of the main reasons why we should reconsider the matter.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Member for Gordon has made a pertinent point. I have here the papers that he has already seen, and the *Official Report* from which the figures were derived. It would be helpful if the Minister would refer to that. I see that he is nodding his head. Hon. Members would like to see a detailed statement. We feel that, leaving the Norwegian example aside, it just does not make sense for us, as an island nation, to write off wave power. Even if the Norwegian example had not been in existence, we should be pursuing that route for renewable energy.

Something else has been presented to us as new—the burning of waste. I applaud everything that the Government are doing in this respect, and their conversion to the case. I make this not as a point against the Government, but as a complaint against the nation. We are not the leaders; we are back with the laggards. It would be wrong to present ourselves as the leaders in waste burning. Many of the continental coutries have done this for a long time, as the Minister knows, and he and I have visited plants in Denmark and Sweden and seen the magnificent work there. They have taken it a stage further by integrating a combined heat and power system and a local district heating system. The latter was referred to by hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), who spoke about the particular problems of Belfast.

Hon. Members have recited examples from their constituencies of individual firms using different ways to heat their premises. That should be encouraged and we have to pursue the work that has been going on at Doncaster, where the local council has been involved with the Department of the Environment in a scheme. In Newcastle, a similar scheme, involving the use of propellants, has been set up.

This brings us to the divergence between the two sides of the House as to the true cost of any scheme. I hope that we have converted the Government from their narrow ideas on alternative energy sources. However, not only money, but other factors are involved. One thinks of the environmental impact. Perhaps the Minister can give us an assurance that when he is making a decision on what should go ahead he always makes the invironmental impact assessment. I hope that that will particularly be the case with the two studies of the Severn barrage scheme, which may be finished by the end of the year, because that is very important.

Other costs are involved, such as those of transport, nuisance and sea pollution. The amount of material dumped at sea, particularly in the North sea, is outrageous. As the Minister knows, we do not have the best reputation in Europe for the way in which we treat the North sea. I know that the argument is that our situation is different because we have fast rivers and currents. Nevertheless, we pollute the North sea more than any other nation, although people may point fingers at the Germans. We not only use our rivers—we take stuff out to sea to dump it. The cost of that may eventually have to be borne by the fishermen from constituencies such as mine, who have told me that their catches have fallen by tenfold in the past 20 years. I cannot say whether their figure is right, but there is an obvious shortfall in the catches.

The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), the hon. Member for Rochford and other hon. Members spoke about straw burning, which is a perennial and major problem. It causes a great deal of nuisance. The problem has not been lessened by the Government's decision to halve the amount available to the Soil Survey as from April this year. That is a retrograde step. We believe that the Soil Survey's expertise should be used to investigate the soils into which it would be beneficial to plough back straw and those into which it would not and those areas where we must find alternative uses for straw. The work of the energy technology support unit and other groups suggests that farmers are using straw to heat their houses, byres and buildings. The technology jump needed to utilise the fuels is not great. There have been huge developments during the past 10 years in the technology applied to wood burning. The oil price hike of the mid-1970s made that necessary. I believe that before long we shall burn up to 1 million tonnes of straw to heat not only farms but rural industry. The chalk drying plant operated by Needhams Chalk Ltd. in Suffolk has a demonstration project. We hope that it will be successful and will point the way forward.

The fifth aspect—conservation and insulation—has been mentioned. We were pleased to read about the Government's recent announcement on "Monergy 86". All our worst fears are borne out when we see the way in which the Government are adapting "energy" and "money", but I shall say no more on that point. We wish the Government well. I hope that there will be a great advance in conservation measures in 1986. But is the Under-Secretary of State happy with the co-ordination between Government Departments?

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Department of the Environment has announced major cuts next year in the home insulation programme?

Mr. David Hunt *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but the figures show that each local authority has received an allocation for 1985-86 from the Department of the Environment which, on average, is 30 per cent. below the 1984-85 allocation. In some cases the figues are much worse. When we talk about lack of home insulation, we talk about people living in great discomfort and in bad winters risking hypothermia.

Mr. Hunt: It may be helpful if I explain why I shook my head. There have not been savage cuts in the home insulation grant. The history of the grant is one of underspend. The balance of the money has been retained to be allocated to those authorities that meet the revised targets and overspend. This year I hope that we shall exhaust the amount of money allocated, which is exactly the same as last year's amount.

Dr. Clark: I take the hon. Gentleman's point but, discounting the holdback, the total amount allocated this year to the English homes insulation programme is still 15 per cent. below the value of the previous year. I concede that consumers can claim extra, but the councils will not be able to make up the loss. There have been cuts in the home insulation scheme: Lambeth 87 per cent., Stockton-on-Tees 82 per cent., Norwich 69 per cent., Plymouth 65 per cent., Taff-Ely 84 per cent., Cynon Valley 77 per cent., and Monmouth 64 per cent. Even taking into account the Minister's point that local authorities can return when they have spent up to their level, I doubt whether Lambeth will ever make up 13 per cent. to reach 100 per cent. I emphasise the fact that the overall reduction is 15 per cent. on current values. There has been a change in the formula, but the overall amount of money is still reduced by 15 per cent. Other hon. Members have referred to that point. It is an example of a lack of co-ordination between Government Departments.

I feel that the point made by several hon. Members about the machinery of government is pertinent. One of the problems of renewables is that the subject is ranked way down within the management structure of the Department of Energy. It is headed by the chief scientist, whereas each of the other major sources has an under-secretary as its head. It is the odd man out in the management structure. The fact that it is so low has meant that it has not always had the co-ordination with other Departments that it should have had. We are unhappy about that. A point that other hon. Members have made is worth repeating. There should be a closer link with the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry. One might wonder whether the export aspect of renewables should be with the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of Energy. There is a certain logic in saying that, if solar development is within the Department of Energy, solar development for export should also be within that Department. There needs to be a study of the whole machinery of government.

We should be putting more money into renewables and formulating an energy conservation policy. The hon. Member for Gordon put the point fairly and strongly. To be successful, there must be capital investment. We must put the money up front, as he said. He is right. An energy conservation agency is needed to co-ordinate activities along the lines suggested in the fifth report of the Select Committee on Energy.

This has been a good debate. I have made my criticisms. I probed the Minister. I have suggested what we would do differently. My main anxiety, if I have one, is about philosophy. I was worried by the Minister's repeated emphasis on cost effectiveness throughout his speech. I realise that we have a Government who worship monetarism, but I suggest that this is one subject to which it is inappropriate to apply the simple cash nexus.

I had to smile because I could not help thinking at times that the Minister was running his Department's policies, not on Civil Service lines but almost like a bookie's office. All the phrases were there. "We are going for the long shot; we are backing winners." I expected to hear about the racing certainties. I wondered which ideas would be the accumulators and which would be the each way bets. That was slightly worrying.

I shall end with a slightly different analogy which the Minister has used previously. He said, correctly, that renewables are our insurance policies because we shall depend on our present energy forms for many years, no matter what policy decisions are taken. However, the point is whether the amount that we are spending — £14 million—is sufficiently high a premium to guarantee the insurance. That is the question that the House must answer.

2.10 pm

Mr. David Hunt: This has been a marvellous debate, and I welcome the contributions that have been made. It has been extremely valuable to range as widely and comprehensively as we have over the whole area. I appreciate the kind remarks made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been rightly praised for his initiatives in many areas. In particular, I welcomed the diversity of views on what the priorities should be. It was not quite as simple as the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) sought to summarise it. I regard that diversity as extremely important. In opening the debate, I stressed the importance of technical transfer and education in encouraging the commercial take-up of the renewables shown to be economic. The debate has also been a key element in drawing public attention to renewables.

I am grateful for the technical support that I have had. Scientists always tend to disagree. Today some scientists have been backed against others. We, as Members of the House of Commons, must rise above the merely technical arguments and try to fit the priorities into the overall policy structure.

There have been 12 speakers. It was appropriate that we should start with the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) who, for five years, was Under-Secretary of State for Energy. Therefore, he draws on a wealth of experience. Part of that experience is knowing how to put questions to junior Ministers summing up debates. I counted 47 questions. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, as will other Members, if I do not go through every question in detail, and that they will give me an opportunity to respond in written form to the questions that I do not have time to cover.

A leading figure in this area is my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller), the chairman of the all-party group Parligaes, who has been pressing for such a debate for a long time. He has great knowledge, experience and enthusiasm. However, he does not have great knowledge, experience and enthusiasm for surfing off the north Devon coast, to which he referred as an example of wave power. Four weeks ago I went to Australia. I said to the Australians, "Here is all this wave power around the coast. Are you still pursuing your wave power investigations?" They said, "No. We have examined it carefully but it is nowhere near economic."

I mention that because in some ways individuals behind the debate, some brilliant and outstanding in their field, have their own hobby horses to run.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) made a clear, concise and businesslike speech. He emphasised wind and tidal, not wave, energy. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) made a thoughtful contribution, but he reflected a little of the inconsistency about the spend, as did the hon. Member for Midlothian. There is always a limited amount of money. There never can be unlimited funding for the renewables programme. Therefore, it is necessary to get the priorities right. Let us have a good debate on what those priorities should be, but let us not think that it is all black and white, simple, easy and naturally obvious to anyone who cares to consider it, because it is not.

I rely heavily on the support that I receive from my advisory committee ACORD. In a robust speech, such as we always expect from him, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that there is nobody in that committee who understands anything about renewables. It was never intended that ACORD should represent sectional interests. The council is broadly based and comprises people of high repute and integrity. They are all independent and are drawn from the academic world, private industry and enthusiasts. The principal qualification for membership is broad experience relevant to research and development. The programme that the Government have announced is broadly in line with ACORD's unanimous recommendations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) mentioned liquefaction and gasification. I should like to return to that matter. He also mentioned combined heat and power. Such programmes are important, but I had not regarded them as relevant to today's debate. They merit a debate of their own. They represent tremendous potential, which is why my right hon. Friend has allocated £250,000 each to Leicester, Belfast and Edinburgh, to conduct studies into CHP. We await those studies with interest. I was present at the signing of the contracts and have met the leaders of the consortiums. I have asked them to keep me closely in touch with developments. Many right hon. and hon. Members will be watching them closely.

I hope that the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) will accept my passing his comments on to my opposite number in the Northern Ireland Office. I shall ensure that his questions are responded to.

The nuclear arguments have been advanced strongly today. The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), who is known for his knowledge of the subject, gave us the benefit of his experience and mentioned other matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) made a good speech, in which he said that he went to the Orkneys and found no wind there, but discovered it was all down here on his return. Somebody once said that the trouble with the United Kingdom is that everybody talks about the weather but nobody ever tries to do anything about it. We can never do anything about the problems that my hon. Friend mentioned, but they demonstrate the problems faced by science and technology in these matters. We can never rely on the presence of the resource at the appropriate time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) took us on a tour from everywhere between Hawaii and Japan. He demonstrated his wider vision and gave us some interesting ideas, which I would like to think about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) also made a good speech. He has some clear views, and he said that I should not talk about backing winners. Any politician is criticised for his use of language. In a fair and well balanced speech, the hon. Member for South Shields also took me to task. The Government's programme of support for research and development fully recognises that there will be losers as well as winners. That is a fact of life. There is a huge increase in costs as we proceed from laboratory research to development, to demonstration and finally to exploitation. When I talked of backing winners, I intended to stress our policy of keeping the programme on each technology in the renewables under careful and detailed review so that we do not proceed from one stage to the next, often much more expensive, stage, unless we are satisfied that the technology has some prospect of economic success. If we did not do that, we would prejudice other technologies and ideas.

The policy does not fail to recognise the need to investigate fully all the technologies that offer a prospect of economic energy production. I hope that the House agrees that it is a policy that selects possible winners and proceeds with their development in close conjunction with industry and progressively secures the technology transfer essential for successful exploitation. Taking full account of the United Kingdom's energy resources, I am convinced that that is the sensible way to proceed, and not through crash programmes without regard to costs.

I should mention the hidden hon. Members of the debate who could not be present. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North dealt with the points that my hon. Friends the Members for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) and for Erewash (Mr. Ross) would have raised. Later I shall deal with the points brought to my notice by hon. Members who were sad to be unable to attend today. Some hon. Members were in the Chamber at 3.30 am this morning, and it is difficult to attend when one also has a full constituency programme. It is not fair to judge the interest in this policy sector by the bare numbers who turn up on any one day. For the record, many hon. Members are present, which shows the interest that the matter arouses among hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I started by detailing energy policy, and I do not wish to go over that ground again. However, the hon. Member for Midlothian said that oil and gas would soon run out. I challenge him, because there is no question of that happening in the near future. At present oil and gas exploration in the North sea is at record levels. We expect a significant production of oil to continue well into the next century. Regarding gas, the hon. Gentleman may recall that earlier this year our estimates of the proven and probable reserves were raised by 15 per cent. The Government are confident that we have sufficient gas supplies to meet the country's needs well into the 1990s.

Mr. Spearing: That is only 10 years from now..

Mr. Hunt: We have gas reserves to last into the 1990s, and beyond. I want to answer carefully the question raised by the hon. Member for Midlothian.

We also had the usual arguments about money. One can do anything with figures. I could prove that the Labour

[Mr. Hunt]

Government spent nothing on renewables and that we have spent 90 per cent. of all the money ever spent. Nevertheless, everyone will recognise that we have expanded the sector and the spending considerably. It is difficult to judge year after year. For example, in 1983-84 we spent only £11·3 million, while in 1984-85 we spent £14 million. I did not mention that statistic, because each year must be taken separately, bearing in mind that some programmes have major bills at some stage in the programme. I hope that the House understands that the Government have a good record on renewable energy technology. That is not to be judged only by the £14 million, because it does not take into account the European Community spend, coal gasification and liquefaction or a range of other energy research and development schemes.

This year we spent £1 billion on energy research and development. My chief scientist calculated that figure. We spent £350 million on oil and gas exploration in the North sea and elsewhere, £175 million on energy-intensive equipment manufacturers, £197 million on nuclear power fusion, £123 million on electricity, £78 million on gas, £43 million on coal—that is a wise investment for the future — and about £40 million on renewables technology. That represents a massive spend on research and development in the energy sector.

We are dealing with the renewable technologies. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford, I should say that the renewable technologies, with the exception of conventional hydropower, are unlikely to make a significant contribution to United Kingdom electricity supply this century, but they should make a contribution in the 21st century, which will grow as they become increasingly competitive. A comprehensive assessment of the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy technologies in the United Kingdom is given in ETSU report 30, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. I commend it to hon. Members, because it contains very interesting information.

Wave energy was referred to by about two thirds of the speakers. This theme was stressed by certain hon. Members to the exclusion of others. Some hon. Members consider that it must be placed on an equal footing with other sources of energy. There has been a massive programme of wave energy research, costing £17 million. I have been beaten with the Norwegian stick, but we must put this matter into perspective. The contribution of the Norwegian Government is still very small — about £600,000 a year—compared with the United Kingdom's expenditure of £4 million.

We are closely monitoring the device that is being developed by the Norwegians and the Japanese for small scale use in particularly favourable cliff face locations. I have been asked by ETSU to prepare a report upon it. We shall be interested to know whether the costs of the project, as installed, are as low as have been estimated. However, even if it is successful, the Norwegian project would apply only to small and isolated communities that require limited amounts of power. That is the function of our project elsewhere.

During the course of the programme we have investigated a number of similar devices, and a certain amount of work is still being done. My Department is contributing to a study by Queen's university, Belfast, into a wave energy system which could be installed in a rock gully on an island site. Energy would be extracted from an oscillating water column by taking advantage of natural rock formations in coastal locations. Energy would be extracted by a Wells air turbine, which was invented and developed at Queen's university. Similar work is being undertaken in Norway and Japan.

We must carefully monitor all that is taking place in this crucial area. That is why international collaboration is so important. However, we must highlight those priorities upon which there should be maximum expenditure. That is why I have spent a great deal of time explaining why we are spending so much upon wind energy, which is much more promising. That is the unanimous view of my advisers.

I point out to the hon. Member for Midlothian that the cost of developing coal gasification and liquefaction is not contained in the £14 million. Substantial and wise investment by British Gas and the National Coal Board is taking place in that area. It is in addition to the figures to which I have referred.

Tidal energy has also been mentioned. In the United Kingdom this is potentially a large, self-renewing source of energy. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friends' points. I await with great interest the tidal power report from the power group. Its report is expected before the end of this year. We shall then be able to consider this matter in greater detail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North referred to the energy equipment test centre at Cardiff. I recognise its importance. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) have already conducted a very strong lobby on behalf of Professor Brinkworth, the director of the centre. It does excellent work in active solar energy. I understand that proposals to continue to provide financial assistance to the centre are being considered sympathetically by the Department of Trade and Industry.

The warmer campaign was mentioned. Government policy is to encourage the use of waste as a fuel where this is environmentally acceptable and where there is no further economic use for the waste. The Government welcome the warmer campaign and are happy that Ministers have participated in the events that it has staged.

We have had some wonderful examples of what could be done with photovoltaic power, but no one has seriously argued that that is a renewable source for the future, bearing in mind our climatic conditions. However, there are good arguments for developing such systems for export, and over the past five years the DTI has made offers of assistance amounting to over £2 million for such projects, and the Department is currently supporting two projects on solar cells, which, if successful, should lead to the United Kingdom manufacture.

We have had a good debate, and I hope that *Hansard* will try to reflect——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

St. Vincent's Primary School, Redbridge

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are 21 Bills on the Order Paper that were moved originally under the ten-minute Bill procedure. All are important, though some are more important than others and I am particularly concerned about the Pensioners' Heating and Communications Bill.

Why does a Bill of great importance and enormous concern to millions of pensioners appear to have been manoeuvred out of the way by the Government naming today as a day for Government business rather than a day for dealing with a number of these important Bills? The House must reflect the views of people outside and the enormous worries about this matter, because of the onset of winter, with the hardship that many pensioners will face through having to meet fuel bills.

The Pensioners' Heating and Communications Bill would alleviate the hardship that many pensioner households are facing with dread. We look to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for help and guidance on how, in the dying days of this Session, the issue can be debated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I do not question the importance that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends attach to the Bill, but they know that at the start of each Session the House itself decides how many days — and which dates — should be allocated for debating private Members' legislation. This is not one of those days.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all understand that there is a shortage of time for private Members' legislation, but I do not understand why Bills appear on the Order Paper if they are not to be read out. Under what Standing Order does that happen? The Bills are apparently able to be moved, if not debated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am following the practice that the House has followed in all the years that I have been an hon. Member. The outstanding orders and notices of motion are put on the Order Paper. We are doing nothing different from what has been done in every Session in the 21 years in which I have been an hon. Member.

I hope that the House will bear in mind that we are now eating into the time allocated for the Adjournment.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand what you are saying to the House. You are really saying that it has always been done like this and it will go on like this for ever. We are trying to suggest that it is time that some changes were made. As you know, Mr. Speaker is in charge of certain matters in the House. We have just come back after a long recess and the whole place has been furnished. Thousands of pounds has been spent on new carpets at £30 per sq yd——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be fair to the hon. Member who has the Adjournment. I understand the concern that has been expressed about the Pensioners' Heating and Communications Bill, but this is not the occasion to make speeches about expenditure in the House.

I hope that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will bear in mind when he is expressing his concern about the need for change that that is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the House and it will be a bad day when the Speaker tells the House rather than the House telling the Speaker. I urge the hon. Gentleman to walk round and see the wise words of Mr. Speaker Lenthall in the No Lobby. I hope that we can now get on, rather than deprive the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) of his Adjournment debate.

Mr. Skinner: I have not finished. I was trying to explain that the comforts of the people in this place are always looked after. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was trying to discuss a Bill to look after the comforts of pensioners and get rid of standing charges. It is a scandal that money can be found to look after Members of Parliament and God knows how many other members of the Establishment, but when we try to look after 9·5 million pensioners who find it difficult to live it is a different story altogether. That is my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I entirely understand the hon. Gentleman's concern but this is not the occasion to make the speech that he might have made if we had been discussing that Bill.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for your indulgence. I agree with my hon. Friends that it is an abuse of the procedure for the Government to use the last Friday to discuss Government business when so many important private Member's Bills have not yet been dealt with——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have made it clear that the House itself decides at the beginning of each Session how much time will be allocated to private Members' Bills and the dates on which those Bills will be discussed. We have exhausted that time. The remedy lies with the House. I cannot try to vary a decision by the House. I have answered the point of order.

Mr. Cohen: I accept that, but an important element requires your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When Second Readings appear on the Order Paper normally we have an opportunity to shout, "Object." Usually, the Government Chief Whip does that. At least the Bill is then sorted out. Because of Government business, there is no——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The points of order are being made at the expense of time allocated for the Adjournment debate to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) who, I have no doubt, wishes to raise a subject important to him. It is for the House to decide, not me or the Government. The House has decided that this is not a day allocated to the discussion of private Members' Bills.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Chris Smith: I do not wish to detain the House. My point of order is related, but slightly different. The House might have decided a long time ago that

[Mr. Chris Smith]

Government business should take place today, but why is the list of private Members' Bills printed on the Order Paper, giving many of my constituents the impression that they would be discussed? I know that you are concerned for the interests of Back Benchers. Will you discuss with Mr. Speaker the way in which the Order Paper is prepared and the impression that is given to people outside the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that what is happening today is no different from the usual practice. The designated Remaining Orders of the Day and Notices of Motions appear on the Order Paper because that is precisely what they are. I ask the hon. Gentleman to bear in mind the protests that he and other hon. Members would make if we followed his suggestion and omitted them. That is not a matter for me but for the House and perhaps the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Banks: It is different but related, naturally. Since Whips representing the Government business managers are present, will they explain whether we shall have a chance to debate any of the issues before the Session ends on Wednesday? If we are not to be given that opportunity some important prospective legislation will be buried by Wednesday. That seems to be what the Government intend. We are entitled to know whether these important issues can be raised on the Floor of the House before Wednesday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My task is to ensure that Standing Orders are observed and that the conventions are recognised. We are doing nothing different today from what we have done on other occasions. It is wrong, because it is not in the order of business for the day, for hon. Members to seek to discuss private Members' Bills, or a particular private Member's Bill. I hope that we can move on.

Mr. Cohen: On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall try to be as brief as possible. On the Order Paper stands my Bill dealing with racial harassment, which is an important matter. There have been a number of racial attacks in the east end of London—one only last night in Waltham Forest. Many citizens live in a constant state of fear of racial attacks and harassment.

This vital Bill stands on the Order Paper for today, but the House is discarding it. That adds insult to injury for those affected by racial harassment. I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to find a way under the conventions of the House to extend this sitting or to make time available before the House completes its Session next Wednesday, so that the Bill can be properly considered by Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the power to do neither of those things, as the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well. Equally, he knows that there are many Bills outstanding on the Order Paper, no doubt all of them dear to the hearts of the hon. Members who proposed them. None of them can be discussed because we have exhausted the time that the House allocated at the beginning of the Session to private Members' motions. We are about to start a new Session, and when we discuss these matters then perhaps the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind the points that he has put to me today. I can do nothing about these matters now, and I hope that we can get on with the Adjournment.

2.40 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I deplore the fact that more than one third of the time allocated for consideration of my constituents' problems has been consumed by Labour Members of Parliament raising matters that could quite properly be raised elsewhere — and, on your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should have been dealt with in that way.

I shall therefore immediately turn to the problems that have arisen because of the current position at St. Vincent's Roman Catholic primary school, Waldegrave road, Redbridge. The school was built in 1929 and the only alterations since then have been the addition of an assembly hall and a kitchen, which were added in about 1964.

The children's main toilet facilities were built at the same time as the school, and there have been no major alterations or improvements since the parents' association roofed in the area in 1980-81 with clear PVC corrugated sheeting that leaks and gives no protection against the cold.

The toilets are unheated and poorly lit. Washing facilities are not immediately available near the toilet area, and the children must re-enter the school before washing their hands, with the risk of spreading infection on door handles and the possibility of their forgetting to wash their hands.

Mrs. Judith Gleeson, the present extremely able and competent head teacher, took up her appointment at the school in July 1984. She was appalled to discover the state of the toilets, which she considered to be unsuitable. She requested the local education authority to clean and repair them before the school re-opened in September, to avoid the need to advise the chairman, Monseigneur McKenna, and the governors that the school should be closed until the toilets were fit to use.

During the extremely cold spell that lasted several weeks at the beginning of this year—and during similar cold spells in previous years—the toilets were frozen almost every day and the caretaker had to carry many buckets of hot water to defrost them. Each night through the winter months it is necessary to drain the entire system to minimise the risk of freezing. The caretaker has carried out such duties since he came to the school 11 years ago. Almost every year he needs to spend a considerable amount of time during winter months taking care of the toilets so that they are available for the children.

The total cost of the project to provide new toilets and internal remodelling is £70,207 in the current financial year. That requires a grant of £63,000 from the Department of Education and Science under the planned grant earning expenditure as opposed to committed grant earning expenditure.

On 4 March of this year, the Department wrote defining the categories under which the distribution of resources to voluntary aided schools were determinded. One referred to basic need, but it referred only to new or expanded schools. Surely, basic need should include the provision of adequate hygienic toilet facilities for children at school.

The Minister wrote to me on 7 March saying:

"You will appreciate that owing to pressure on resources generally, it has been necessary for the Department to place a strict limit on the number of new building starts which can be accommodated in any given year. It is also, unfortunately, the case that the level of committed expenditure falling to be met in the coming year in respect of projects already in hand has proved to be substantially higher than was originally anticipated. As a result, it has proved possible to programme only those new projects which are required in order to meet basic need of population growth or shift and those required in order to implement proposals approved by the Secretary of State under the Education Act, 1980. In consequence, the work now proposed at St Vincent's school . . . could not be found a place in the 1985-86 programme."

In his letter, the Minister added an assurance

"that the project, if resubmitted by Redbridge LEA, will be very carefully considered in the process of formulating the new programme for 1986-87."

The Health and Safety Executive inspector was then consulted and informed Mr. David Squires, the assistant diocesan education secretary, under health and safety legislation, that there was no legislation referring to toilet provision for children in schools. Surely children deserve such protection. The assistant diocesan education secretary wrote on 10 January 1985 to the Department:

"Our proposal at St. Vincent's School, Becontree Heath, constitutes a minor works scheme and although the Authority has supported the project, the Department of Education and Science has not made an allocation available. At this school we are dealing with a very serious health and safety matter. I think you will agree that we had indicated to the Head Teacher and Governors that because this case was so urgent it was highly likely that the Department of Education and Science would support the scheme. Over the last few days I have spoken to the Head Teacher and she informs me that during this very cold weather the caretaker and teaching staff have had to spend a considerable amount of time pouring boiling water down the lavatories to defrost them. The toilets in question are extremely unhygienic and I think it is likely that they will very soon have to be taken out of use. There are no other lavatories in the school for the age group that uses the external toilets and the closure of the toilet block in question will lead to an extremely serious deficiency in toilet provision in relation to the School Premises Regulations 1981."

This matter was raised first by Mr. Squires on 31 July 1984, when he wrote to Mr. Radcliffe, director of education services for the London borough of Redbridge, saying:

"Following our recent telephone conversations regarding St. Vincent's School, Becontree, we are including in our submission a bid for the replacement of toilets and other improvement works. As you know, these matters are most pressing and we hope that an allocation will be forthcoming in 1985-86."

It seems extraordinary that in 1985, when we are speaking of the need to provide in the majority of schools computers and other important facets of modern technology to prepare youngsters for an effective and constructive role in society, that we should be so neglecting this basic hygienic need. Is not the need for hygiene a basic concept of life?

I recently had the honour to visit Nepal; the Minister is aware that I am chairman of the Anglo-Nepalese all-party parliamentary group. In that country the schools are of an extremely basic nature. People must club together to build their own schools and finance them for five years before they are taken over by the Government. Thank goodness, we in Britain have long passed that state of affairs.

At the same time, hygiene is an important and essential element in the education of the children. The conditions that were just acceptable when my hon. Friend and I went to this type of school many years ago are entirely unacceptable now. As recently as 1945, perhaps as many as a quarter of homes in Britain had no internal toilet facilities. I believe that the figure has now fallen to less than 2·5 per cent., thanks to major schemes to make internal toilet facilities available through the 1950s and 1960s. That is undoubtedly an important improvement in our general standard of living. There is a grave need for toilet facilities to be adequately provided, especially in the training of young people in a formative period in their life.

The cost of the scheme is likely to have risen to about £90,000 in the next financial year, but we should not lose sight of the fact that building works are an important aspect of the employment programme. Building works are labour-intensive and the Government should surely be paying great attention to spending money in a way that will help to alleviate employment problems as well as improving conditions for our children.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): The hon. Gentleman has made a strong case for £90,000 to be spent at a Roman Catholic school in his constituency. Is he aware that the Catholic church itself, in the shape of the diocesan schools commission, wants to spend £1·3 million on a Catholic school in Birmingham so that it can close the Archbishop William's school in my constituency, which does not need any money spent on it at all?

Mr. Thorne: I know that the Catholic church is keen on education and that it pays its appointed share. I know also that it has every intention of doing so in the case which I am raising. It is extremely keen that the facilities that I am talking about shall be provided for the children in my constituency. I hope that my hon. Friend will have some good news for me and my constituents that will ensure that the Dickensian conditions of which I have spoken are banished from the schools of Ilford, South as quickly as possible.

2.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) for raising a number of important matters. Unfortunately, due to the consumption of time on points of order earlier, I shall not be able in the time available to me to respond to all the matters that I might have dealt with had I had more time. I regret that I cannot give public undertakings on some of the issues to which my hon. Friend has addressed himself. I undertake to write to him on any matters which I am unable to cover in the short time that remains to me.

I am grateful for the close interest that my hon. Friend has shown in St. Vincent's Roman Catholic primary school. His constituents should know that he has written many letters and lobbied me quite valiantly in its cause. I hope that the people of Ilford, South are fully aware of the tribute that they owe to him for his efforts on their behalf.

The House will know that there are different types of voluntary school and that the most numerous are the voluntary aided. More than 50 per cent. of voluntary schools are of the aided type, whereby certain capital building and external repair work remain the responsibility of the school governors, who are generally entitled to seek an 85 per cent. grant from the Department. The House will know that, in the context of my hon. Friend's earlier remarks, St. Vincent's comes within that category.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South spoke strongly in support of the case for a building project to

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

replace toilet facilities at St. Vincent's Roman Catholic primary school. I can assure my hon. Friend that I fully sympathise with the difficulties created by the present outdoor facilities which the infant children have to use, and I should like to see the facilities replaced. Much as I would like to help St. Vincent's, however, it has not yet been possible to allocate the resources to cover this project.

The House should know that the level of existing commitments on aided school projects estimated for 1985-86 was higher than earlier information had shown. There are a number of reasons for this. For example, in some cases costs have risen beyond the approved level, initial estimates may have turned out to be too low and work may have gone ahead faster than expected. Although the provision made in 1985-86 for all work at aided schools was over £50 million — nearly 12 per cent. higher than last year's expenditure — governors' plans for projects at aided schools totalled more than £90 million. Inevitably that meant that a large number of schools had to be disappointed. Priority clearly had to be given to those projects that fell into the categories referred to by my hon. Friend. I have to repeat a point made many times — that the resources available for capital expenditure in the voluntary aided sector have to be limited to what the country can afford.

If, later this year, resources become available through the delay or cancellation of a project, either in Redbridge or elsewhere, we shall look at the claims of St. Vincent's again, but I can hold out no promises. Any resources that become available will have to go to projects where the need is greatest, and, while I sympathise with the case made on St. Vincent's behalf by my hon. Friend, many schools have a common problem and we can help them only if other priorities are not more pressing.

As to prospects for 1986-87, my hon. Friend knows that I cannot make any promise that resources will be available for St. Vincent's. All bids, including that submitted by Redbridge for the work to replace toilet facilities at the school, are being very carefully considered, and we expect to be able to inform local education authorities of their allocations for 1986-87 close to the end of this year. My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot go any further at this stage.

I apologise to my hon. Friend for the fact that my speech is, of necessity, brief. I am grateful to him for securing the debate and I shall undertake to do what I can to assist.

Mr. Neil Thorne: Will my hon. Friend be kind enough to make one promise? I do not know whether he looks at all these cases personally, but will he do so in this instance before any decision about 1986-87 is made?

Mr. Dunn: Inasmuch as my powers may go as far as that, I shall do what I can to assist my hon. Friend. On behalf of the House, I thank him for securing the interests of his constituents so well this afternoon.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 28 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL BILL

MERSEYSIDE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL

DARTMOOR COMMONS BILL

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Berkshire Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session.

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed).

Ordered,

That the Petition relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stands referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session.

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business.

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against bill)" were omitted.

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House.

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time.

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Secondary Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to seek their concurrence thereto.

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Yorkshire Water Authority Bill shall have leave to suspend Proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further Proceedings and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House.

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a Declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill presented to this House in the present Session.

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make only such Amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the present Session, and shall report the Bill, as amended, to the House, forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to be read the third time.

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any Proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to seek their concurrence thereto.

PRIVATE BILLS [LORDS] (SUSPENSION)

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message [23rd October] as relates to the Essex Bill [*Lords*], the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill [*Lords*], the Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) Bill [*Lords*] and the West Glamorgan Bill [*Lords*] be now considered.

Resolved,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution. — *[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

SOUTH YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message [23rd October] as relates to the British Railways Bill and the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Bill be now considered.

Ordered,

That the promoters of the British Railways Bill and the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bills in the next Session of Parliament, provided that in the case of each Bill the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid.

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bills shall be presented to the House.

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with each Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session.

Ordered,

That each Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first, second and third time and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read.

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House— *[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (PORT OF AYR) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL [*LORDS*]

Church of Scotland Trust (Amendment) Order Confirmation Bill [*LORDS*]

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Productivity

1. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the relative changes in productivity in the energy industries since 1980.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): Labour productivity generally in the public sector energy industries has improved since 1980. I hope this progress will continue.

Mr. Favell: I am glad to hear that productivity has increased, but is my right hon. Friend happy that, in July this year, his Department could not say by how much productivity in the gas, coal and electricity industries had increased since the end of 1980, nor could it compare their productivity with the economy as a whole? Are not those figures vital to all British industry?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is important to ensure that any figures provided are meaningful. It is difficult to provide such figures for different industries with different capital intensities and different balances between output and labour and capital use. However, I understand my hon. Friend's concern, and would be happy to discuss the matter further with him.

Dr. Godman: May I ask the Minister a question about the important offshore oil and gas industries? In recent times, what changes in productivity have there been in the offshore construction yards, and is it likely that those yards will receive contracts for offshore structures within the next eight to nine months?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I do not have the exact figures for which the hon. Gentleman asks, but I am delighted to say that our oil fabrication yards have had a good record in recent months and have won a major share of orders from oil industry in the face of fierce international competition. In that respect, their productivity is high.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Has my right hon. Friend discussed North sea oil production with representatives of OPEC? Does he agree that, although there are obvious attractions in a falling oil price, excessive production at a time of falling prices worldwide could lead to a disorderly market?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Any large cut in production would cause a reduction in productivity. Our main concern, as I have said many times in the House, has always been to ensure stability in the oil market. In an area such as the North sea, where risks are great and capital investment is high, it is important to have as stable a market as possible so that such investment continues.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the British Gas Corporation makes no comparisons between the productivity of its men in small-scale distribution work and that of private contractors in reaching a decision to take work from the private sector and do it in-house? Does he agree that that is disgraceful?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Attention has been drawn to that matter from time to time. If there is any sign of

unfairness in that area, I hope that my hon. Friend will urge those who think that is the case to draw it to the attention of the Office of Fair Trading.

Coal Supplies

2. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the level of coal supplies held at power stations.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): The latest published figures are for the end of July. They show stocks held at power stations in Great Britain at 18·6 million tonnes.

Mr. Colvin: Although my right hon. Friend does not run our coal industry, will he follow the example set by his predecessor and encourage the National Coal Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board to build up stocks of coal at both pitheads and power stations so that the resolve of people, particularly miners, who want to continue to work, if there is an industrial dispute, is not undermined by the threat of power shortages?

Mr. Walker: Electricity boards recognise the importance of having good stocks at power stations. The figure is for the end of July, and as August, September and October are the months in which stocks build up fastest, I expect that the next published figure will show quite a big improvemet.

Mr. Baldry: Is there anything about the level of coal stocks which shows the need for an increase in electricity prices beyond the rate of inflation?

Mr. Walker: Not that I know of.

National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

3. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. in providing alternative jobs in mining areas affected by pit closures.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): My right hon. Friend announced at the end of July that the funds available to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. the job creation subsidiary of the National Coal Board, had been doubled to £20 million. In its first year of operation the company has created more than 2,500 job opportunities throughout the coalfields. One hundred and eighty-six projects have been given direct financial assistance, and many more projects are being examined. The company is working closely with new and existing enterprise agencies.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Minister aware that at the Houghton careers office 328 people are registered unemployed, 210 youngsters are on short-term schemes, and there are two job vacancies, yet Eppleton pit is being merged with Murton mines, losing 700 jobs, Lampton coke works was informed at the weekend that it is to close, losing a further 226 jobs, and Ellington pit, according to the latest NCB report, is under a three-monthly review? Why is my area being sacrificed on the altar of monetarism? The £20 million is not enough for my constituency, never mind the rest of the coalfields.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should put the other side of the picture in the north-east. I have had the opportunity of going underground at the coalface in Ellington and Wearmouth during the last few weeks. The spirit there is welcome, productivity records have been broken, and the coal industry in the north-east has terrific opportunities ahead. Both the chairman, Mr. Spanton, and the chief executive, Mr. Hewitt, of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. take a deep personal interest in the problems of mining communities in the north-east. Already 248 job opportunities have been created there.

Mr. Portillo: Further to my hon. Friend's first answer, does he agree that more publicity needs to be given to those achievements to dispel the impression that nothing is being done for communities where pits are closing?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me a further opportunity of stressing the achievements of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. to which the Government attach significant support. Jobs created through projects that are financially supported by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. have risen this month to a rate of 500 a month.

Mr. Mason: Is the Minister aware that since the strike ended the NCB has announced a further 3,000 job losses in Barnsley district because of further pit closures and mergers? Is he aware that that will increase unemployment in my district to 22 per cent.? What will NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. do to assist Barnsley and district in its plight? What additional assistance can his Department give to assist the Coal Field Communities' Campaign to help the distressed mining areas?

Mr. Hunt: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is reassured by the level of commitment that the Government are giving to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. and that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. is showing to communities, which, everyone accepts, are facing extremely serious problems.

Mr. Batiste: Can my hon. Friend confirm that there will be no refusal by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. of good and worthwhile projects which are put to it on the ground of limitation of funds, and that any good job creation scheme in an area of pit closures will be considered favourably?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that reassurance. If hon. Members on either side of the House have any projects in mind, they should discuss them urgently with NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister has assured the House repeatedly that there will be alternative jobs in other pits for men whose pits are closing. Does he agree that that is not strictly true? In effect, he is de-skilling certain jobs, which means that men are not being offered comparable jobs in the industry. There is a target of 350 jobs under the scheme for the whole of Wales, and in my constituency 28 per cent. of the male work force is unemployed. The position has been made worse by a recent pit closure. Will the Minister concede that the scheme is unrealistic?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Lady should recognise that the National Coal Board has, contrary to the expectations of many, been able to keep faith with its pledge of no compulsory redundancies. It is to be applauded for that. Like the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), the hon. Lady has failed to put the other side of the picture. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to go underground at Lady Windsor, Abercynon, which is in the hon. Lady's constituency. I found the spirit of the work force to be excellent. The men are reducing the cost of producing coal and they have a great future provided that coal can regain its place competitively in the market.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituency was badly affected by numerous pit closures some years ago when there was no enterprise company and no thumping redundancy payments? We simply had to get on with it. As a result, our unemployment rate has consistently been half that of the national average. Does my hon. Friend agree that the best advertisement for any area is a skilled and willing population that wishes to work, not strike?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making those important points. Let us not forget that over 11 years previous Labour Government's closed 330 pits, with compulsory redundancy and no enterprise company.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Minister recognise that the £20 million which is available under the scheme only scratches the surface, especially in areas such as the one that I represent where 42 per cent. of all youths aged under 24 years are unemployed? Is the Minister aware that of the coal mines that are operating not one has on its books a boy under the age of 18? No boy has been signed on from school since 1983. There is no evidence in my area that the enterprise scheme is doing any good or attracting any companies into it.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman must realise that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. started with a capital of £5 million, which the Government doubled to £10 million and then doubled again to £20 million. More money will be made available as and when necessary. I urge Labour Members to contact NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. and to discuss with it vital projects in their areas.

Mr. Rowlands: We are saying that the money is necessary now. The hon. Gentleman has spoken of 2,000 jobs having been created, but 2,000 jobs have been lost in the mining industry in the Welsh coalfield since March. The efforts that have been made do not compare with the demands and the needs of our community. Will the Minister tell us that he will accelerate his programme to match the acceleration in pit closures?

Mr. Hunt: The Government have made it clear to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. that more money will be made available as and when necessary. I urge Labour Members to discuss with NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. the strategic problems in the areas that they represent instead of criticing it.

Mr. Mason: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of that reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise this matter in an Adjournment debate.

Coal Industry

4. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce a new "Plan for Coal".

Mr. Peter Walker: Discussions are taking place to agree the strategy for coal. We are endeavouring to agree a strategy that will provide coal at economic cost to the consumer and a good future for the industry.

Mr. Hannam: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the original 1974 "Plan for Coal" failed on several important counts—productivity, demand estimates and estimates of pit closures? Does not the National Coal Board's new strategy represent a much more realistic set of targets based on achieving a profitable and expanding industry founded on competitively priced coal?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I think that one of the great ptities of the original strategy was the total lack of performance in terms of productivity targets. I hope that productivity will improve substantially. Productivity improvements will give the best prospects for the coal industry.

Mr. Ryman: What progress, if any, has been made in the negotiations between the right hon. Gentleman's Department, the NCB and the NUM about establishing a new, independent appeals procedure to hear appeals on colliery reviews concerning proposed pit closures? I understand from what the right hon. Gentleman said to me on 19 June and 4 October that the bodies are nearing agreement. What is the present position?

Mr. Walker: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows from my discussions with him that I share his anxiety that a modified procedure should be established quickly. On the latest information available to me, I can see no reason why that modified procedure should not be agreed this week.

Mr. Barron: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that if his new strategy is based purely on the assumption of the markets likely to be gained, it will inevitably fail because the lead time between investing in the industry and getting coal out of the ground can be anywhere between five and 10 years? What we need is a strategy based not on so-called markets but on coal for the future. Energy policy can be based on that. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that we should be talking about tonnages in the year 2,000 and nothing else?

Mr. Walker: In the last strategy we had 10 years of investment, but, alas, not 10 years of improving productivity.

Mr. Michael Morris: Are not the key determinants in any future strategy, first, that there should be flexibility and, secondly that there should be nothing written in tablets of stone which would prevent the NCB from doing what is in the interests of that great industry?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Eadie: I have here a copy of the new coal strategy. It is a very poor description, and certainly not a policy. It is a strategy for contraction of the coal industry. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, if one examines the document further, one sees that the board doubts whether total coal production will be 90 million tonnes? Coal production could be below that level and, if it is, there will be more massive pit closures.

Mr. Walker: No one knows better than the hon. Gentleman that the only way for the coal industry to expand is to improve productivity. It would be nice to hear some original proposals from the NUM on how productivity can be increased.

5. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further information he has received from the National Coal Board regarding further pit closures.

9. **Willie W. Hamilton:** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement in the reduction of manpower in the coal industry since the end of the miners' strike; and how many further redundancies are planned for the next 12 months.

Mr. Peter Walker: Individual pit closures and the future manpower requirements of the industry are matters for the NCB. I understand that, since the end of the strike, 16 pits have closed. The net reduction in numbers of men on colliery books from 9 March to 28 September was some 17,100. The level of future redundancies will depend upon the board's operational requirements and the numbers of men volunteering to go on the terms available.

Mr. Pike: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that present and proposed pit closures are not in our long-term interests? Should not the Government's mandate to the NCB be to pay more attention to our long-term rather than short-term energy requirements and to stop pit closures in areas where there is workable coal?

Mr. Walker: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I think that the pit closures that have taken place are sensible. Our long-term requirement is energy at an economic cost for the benefit of our economy.

Mr. Hamilton: Will the right hon. Gentleman give the figures in the Scottish context? With respect to the answer to question No. 3, how many of those 2,500 jobs have been created in Scotland? The right hon. Gentleman should rest assured that for a long time a large number of Labour Members have regarded Mr. Scargill as the greatest disaster to befall the NUM since its inception.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I would have difficulty in disagreeing with the final part of his question. I do not have the breakdown of the Scottish figures, but I shall send them to him this evening. I recognise that there are some considerable problems for Scotland.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Successive Secretaries of State for Energy have closed pits, reduced manpower, and told us that productivity is being increased, so that in the end we would not have to put more thousands of millions of pounds into the coal mines. Could my right hon. Friend at least tell us when he thinks, as another Secretary of State, we should stop having to put thousands of millions of pounds down the coal mines and will get a real return for the taxpayer?

Mr. Walker: Investment in new machinery in better pits has been on a considerable scale, but, alas, there has been a lack of improvement in productivity. The current productivity figures for this year have been substantial, and I can only hope that that trend will increase. However, I cannot say what industrial or other action might take place to disrupt that progress.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: As the Union of Democratic Mineworkers has clearly demonstrated that it is representative of a large group of people in the mining industry, will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that, if he discusses the future of the coal industry with various bodies, he will include the UDM if it wishes?

Mr. Walker: The coal board has recognised the UDM, so, in its discussions on matters such as the future of the coal strategy, presumably it will be included. I have always agreed to see the leaders of any trade union that is recognised.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is it not the case that many pits were overmanned in the first place and that the output now, after some miners have left voluntarily, is not affected too much? Is it not interesting to note that many miners who have been prepared to take voluntary redundancy have been given a good deal by the National Coal Board, which should be supported?

Mr. Walker: It is certainly true that the problem of closures of uneconomic pits is being treated in a more civilised and generous way than it was ever treated by any Labour Government in our history.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Secretary of State has not got his figures correct for Wales, in regard to what my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) said, when he referred to Scargill and his predictions. In fact, the numbers of redundancies were underestimated by him if one considers the way that they have escalated in Wales. Is the Secretary of State aware that, despite an Adjournment debate and a series of questions, St. John's colliery in my constituency is now due for closure—not under the new review procedure that was promised to me by right hon. Gentleman's side-kick on the Front Bench —and that 800 miners are to be made redundant in an area where male unemployment is now 24 per cent. and will escalate to 50 per cent.? What action will the right hon. Gentleman take to deal with the unemployment problems in my constituency?

Mr. Walker: I can only suggest to the hon. Gentleman that, as many Opposition Members know, the coal board has made several offers under the modified procedure, which nobody could argue was other than in keeping with the proposals that have been made. If the unions disagree with the offer that is on the table, that will be extraordinary. I gather that if they agree, there is no reason why the closures, including that of St. John's, should not go ahead under that modified procedure.

Mr. Dormand: The Secretary of State keeps referring to the modified review procedure. Is he aware that it is a year since the principles were agreed with the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers? Is it not obvious that the NCB has been deliberately delaying its implementation so that it can get on with closing pits? If the new scheme is agreed next week—we hope it is—will there be a review of all the pits that have been or are proposed to be closed, such as Horden in my constituency and Bates in Northumberland? Will they be subject to the review after the scheme is implemented next week?

Mr. Walker: With regard to the suggestions that have been made, some months ago there was agreement on the terms of reference on all the detail. The disagreement was on the composition. There was an offer of independent planning inspectors and independent lawyers, which was rejected, not by the coal board but by the other side. The agreement that is now available is an independent machinery, which is obvious to anybody. I hope that, not next week but this week, the unions will accept that offer. If they do, several closures that have been going through can be put through the modified procedures.

Mr. Eadie: The right hon. Gentleman must remember that my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) has previously raised the question of the new modified colliery procedure and drawn it to the attention of the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman uses the word "sacrosanct". Is he aware that a new situation has arisen? We find, without exception, that the National Union of Mineworkers, the British Association

of Colliery Management and the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers take exception to the National Coal Board deciding unilaterally what kind of independent review proceedure there should be. Will the right hon. Gentleman intervene and tell the NCB that it is time it got back to the negotiating table and to the days when negotiations meant negotiations and not dictation?

Mr. Walker: I totally disagree with that interpretation. There have been a number of occasions on which any fair and reasonable person would agree that a totally independent procedure was on offer. I do not believe that there has been any delay on the part of the NCB.

Fluidised Bed Combustion

6. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to promote the further development and use of fluidised bed combustion, in particular in regard to the development of combined heat and power systems.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department, the CEGB and the NCB are jointly funding a design study of an advanced 600 MW power plant employing pressurised fluidised bed combustion. The concept of linking a fluidised bed boiler to CHP plant is also being demonstrated under my right hon. Friend's Energy Efficiency Office's energy efficiency demonstration scheme.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister make it clear that the Government agree that this sort of development would usefully and wisely demonstrate clean and efficient coal use, would provide very necessary industrial orders, and could, under the CHP system, provide considerable help to urban areas, which are currently in dire need? Even, if the NCB's present chairman is not enthusiastic about selling the coal that his industry produces, will the Minister accept that this venture could be extremely useful?

Mr. Hunt: The technology for industrial boilers and furnaces is now fully commercial, with over 50 plants already built or on order. All variations of the technology, which the hon. Gentleman and I have seen, whether shallow, deep or circulating beds, are offered by British manufacturers with full commercial guarantees. It is very much the technology of the future.

Mr. Speller: Will the Minister stress that, in addition to fluidised bed combustion, there are many other ways of making coal efficient, other than by straightforward burning? Will he include such methods as gasification, which have an equal potential for industrial orders and for the future prosperity of the coal industry?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I agree. My hon. Friend made his point very well in his excellent speech last Friday.

Mr. Allen McKay: As the coal-fired power stations will be coming towards the end of their life in the next 80 years, is the Minister proposing to order new coal-fired power stations, using the fluidised bed system?

Mr. Hunt: No. The ordering of the particular systems is a matter for the CEGB.

Mr. Chapman: As the fluidised bed combustion system is one of the methods by which sulphur emissions from power stations can be reduced, will my hon. Friend welcome such a development within CEGB power stations? In the light of the recent Select Committee report on acid rain, recommending that the United Kingdom should play its part in reducing trans-boundary pollution, will he set the CEGB targets for reducing sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions from its power stations as part of a concerted Government policy?

Mr. Hunt: I have already said and made it clear that this is a matter for the CEGB. I confirm, as I said to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), that this is exciting new technology, and considerable advances are already being made in a very positive way.

Energy Prices

8. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairmen of the gas and electricity industries regarding energy prices in the next 12 months.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have frequent meetings with the chairmen. Prices are a matter for the industries.

Mr. Winnick: Are we going to find that the Secretary of State has yet again lost his battle with the Treasury over substantial fuel increases? Is he aware that increasing gas prices cause great hardship to many people, particularly those on low incomes who receive no assistance in paying their fuel bills? When will the Secretary of State recognise that these substantial increases are totally without justification?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should realise that electricity prices have risen by only 6 per cent. over the past three years, whereas under the Labour Government whom he supported they went up by 6 per cent. every four months. If he fights the next election on gas and electricity prices, for the second time he will be defeated by the electorate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that efficiency improvements in the gas and electricity industries should be passed on to the customer and to industry to maintain competitiveness with cheap energy countries? Will he, therefore, impress on his Cabinet colleagues that if they wish to increase taxation it should be done openly and not by artificially increasing prices?

Mr. Walker: That is why I am pleased that in real terms not only are gas prices at the same level as in 1970, but that in the last three years both gas and electricity prices have gone down in real terms. I rejoice in that fact.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that he and the Government have shown a bad example over the past few years to any potential private owners of British Gas as to how to exploit a monopoly? Will he acknowledge that with the privatisation of British Gas there is real tension, with the Government trying to maximise the price at the expense of consumer protection? Will he, as Secretary of State for Energy, assure the House that he is on the side of the consumer?

Mr. Walker: Of course. The record of the past three years shows that consumers of gas and electricity have done better than at any time since the war.

Mr. McQuarrie: While I accept what my right hon. Friend said about the right of industries to agree prices, does he agree that any increase projected by either the gas or the electricity industry as a direct result of the miners' strike would be totally unacceptable to consumers?

Mr. Walker: There are many extra costs arising from the strike. The fact that certain price increases have not taken place during the period of that strike and since indicate that the Government share my hon. Friend's view.

Mr. Rowlands: May I jog the Secretary of State's memory? His predecessor introduced a formula of 10 per cent. above the rate of inflation for three years on the run for gas prices, leading to over 100 per cent. increase. I understand that Sir Denis Rooke has said that there will be no need for increases in gas prices above the rate of inflation. Will the Secretary of State assure us that the Government are not proposing, or assuming that there will be, any bigger increases than this in future?

Mr. Walker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would care to ask, in the form of a written question, for publication of a list of price rises under a Labour Government as compared with this Government. The answer will show that their record vis à vis inflation or anything else is an appalling and disgusting one, of which the Labour party should be ashamed.

Electricity Supply Industry (Restructuring)

10. **Mr. Skeet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to restructure the electricity supply industry and the area boards.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): There are no present plans to reform the structure of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Skeet: I am very much obliged for that succinct answer. Will my hon. Friend consider over the long term, as the coal board supplies some 80 per cent. of its coal to the CEGB, the merger of these two industries under the electricity supply industry so that we can remove a certain number of anomalies? Will he also authorise, in the intermediate term, the CEGB to supply big projects with energy direct in order to reduce their costs?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is an expert in these matters and raises some extremely interesting points, which I shall certainly consider.

Mr. Pavitt: Although he is not completely restructuring the system, will the Minister look at the total dissatisfaction among hon. Members arising from complaints from their constituents about the way in which their bills are handled? Is he aware that the consultative committee has become a bit of a farce? If he cannot totally restructure, will he do something, especially for the elderly, about the way in which area boards handle complaints about bills?

Mr. Goodlad: In my experience, the area boards and consultative committees handle complaints extremely effectively, but if the hon. Gentleman has any particular cases in mind I hope that he will draw them to my attention.

Energy Act 1983

11. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the working of the Energy Act 1983.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is too early to evaluate the full effects of the Act, but it is encouraging that the number of private generators selling electricity to boards in Great Britain rose from 59 in 1983-84 to 70 in 1984-85.

Mr. Rost: Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the fact that there is increasing evidence from private producers who claim that they are still not obtaining a fair price for their electricity and that the CEGB is not applying the spirit of section 19, which obliges the industry to adopt and support CHP and try to market its waste heat? Is he aware that the Sheffield consortium has been rejected by the CEGB even though the rate of return on its CHP scheme is in excess of the 5 per cent. discount rate required by nationalised industries and would be a higher rate of return than many other investments that the electricity industry is undertaking?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Act provides a proper framework for fair trading. The figures that I have just announced show that there is considerable interest in the matter and that there is a reverse of the progressive decline that there was in private generation until the passing of the Act.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Library (Usage)

28. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Lord Privy Seal what has been the increase over the last 10 years in queries put by hon. Members to the Library.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Over the period 1975-84 the percentage increase in the number of Members' inquiries answered in writing by the research division and by the international affairs section of the House of Commons Library was 77 per cent.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that many Members of the House are grateful to the Library staff for the high quality of work and help that they give us, but that that is still no substitute for providing us with decent back-up? The two types of help are complementary. May I press the Leader of the House to think again about the need to provide each Member of the House who requires it with sufficient resources to employ one secretary and one research assistant?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman was shrewd to make the point about our gratitude to the Library staff, because that will unite the whole Chamber. I am not sure that the same is true of his second point. With the growth in the number of research assistants, one might have thought that there would be less demand upon the Library's research facilities, but in fact the reverse is true.

Mr. Hayward: Following the comments of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House reviews the opportunity for Members to have at least one research assistant, will he also consider limiting the number of research assistants that Members should have?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises two separate issues. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) was hoping that the review of the secretarial research allowance would proceed on the basis that the sum should include an amount equivalent to the financing of one full-time research

assistant. The second point was made in the recent debate that we had on this matter. Whatever number of research assistants a Member might have, no more than two employees of a Member can have access to the House.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the excellent help that the Library gives Members, how long will it be before the Leader of the House reviews the number of research assistants that hon. Members can have? Will he give an undertaking that that matter will receive priority over and above investigations into Members' salaries for this financial year?

Mr. Biffen: Members' salaries for this financial year operate under an automatic formula. The subject of hon. Members' research assistants and the degree of access that they have has been remitted to the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), and he will be reporting to the House in due course.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the latest contacts that I have had with the Library have told me about the emergence of an interesting new species—the research assistant's secretary? Is he aware of the conundrum of big fleas, little fleas and lesser fleas? Does he not think that the amount of Ministers' and Library staff time taken up by these research assistants, their secretaries and their secretaries' research assistants, and the amount of paper used, and the photocopying, has got out of control?

Mr. Biffen: I do not want to stray too far into that controversy, because the matter is now before the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford. It is undoubtedly true that the term research assistant is used fairly liberally in our discussions. Many of those people could in no sense undertake serious research.

Proceedings (Sound Coverage)

31. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Seal if there are any plans to extend to Members' offices facilities for live sound coverage of the proceedings of the House.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that the Select Committee on Sound Broadcasting is undertaking a study of the feasibility and cost of such facilities with a view to making recommendations to the Services Committee in due course, but the introduction of any such scheme would, of course, require the authority of the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Select Committee on Sound Broadcasting has already conducted a survey and that only 398 Members favoured such live sound coverage? In the interests of keeping the House active, will my right hon. Friend disregard that survey in view of the temptation for hon. Members not to turn up in the Chamber at all if everything is broadcast to their offices? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Chamber is empty enough already?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes the very fair point that in this, as in so many other matters, we must have regard to the impact on attendance in the Chamber. I must point out to him, however, that as the matter is now before the Services Committee it would be inappropriate for me to make any observations or draw any conclusions until I have had the benefit of the Services Committee report.

Mr. Faulds: Such a suggestion, Sir, God forfend.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the Services Committee will take note of that.

Mr. Squire: I regret any disagreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), but is my right hon. Friend aware that, although some of our parliamentary colleagues may be less than irresistible in their contributions, many of us who spend a fair part of the day at our desks might appreciate the opportunity to tune in from time to time to see how the proceedings are going?

Mr. Biffen: That is an interesting view of the nature of the parliamentary process, but I must put it firmly on record that whatever we do we must do our utmost to maintain the vitality of this Chamber as the very heart of Parliament.

Opposition Parties (Funding)

32. **Mr. Beith** asked the Lord Privy Seal when he plans to review the funds granted to Opposition parties in Parliament.

Mr. Biffen: The amounts payable to Opposition parties under the Short money scheme have so far been revised on four occasions since the scheme's inception in 1975. The latest rise was effective from 1 January 1985. 45to oFollowing this pattern, a further review would be likely to take place in 1987 or 1988.

Mr. Beith: When the Leader of the House considers the matter again, will he bear in mind that the Short formula does not tell the whole story, because of the enormous range of exclusive fringe benefits granted to the Labour party as the official Opposition? Will he take into account the £80,000 in salaries for leaders of that party in both Houses, the £66,000 for civil servants seconded to them and the £30,000 for a car and chauffeur for the Leader of the official Opposition?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct. The Ministers of the Crown Act 1937, under which a salary was first paid to the Leader of the Opposition, also provided for a number of supporting expenses to come from the public purse. The hon. Gentleman is, therefore, quite right. The evolution of the Short money system since then has meant that two systems have been operating in parallel. I agree that it is perfectly valid to consider that at some future date.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the anomaly that whereas the Labour party apparently sees fit to accept public money to keep its democratic institutions working, a large proportion of the trade union movement apparently resists acceptance of such money to keep its democratic institutions working?

Mr. Biffen: I would rather confine myself to what goes on in this Chamber. I believe that the provision in the 1937 Act allowing public funds to be made available to the Opposition party has proved itself. Perhaps in the fullness of time wiser counsels will also prevail in the trade union movement.

Mr. Dormand: I hope that this will not be treated as a party matter—*[Interruption.]* It will not be too long before the Conservatives find themselves in opposition. We are talking about the workings of a healthy democracy. At present, the Short money is entirely inadequate for an

Opposition to function properly. I was most disturbed to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that the matter will not be reconsided until about 1987. Does he agree that it should be done much sooner?

Mr. Biffen: There are some who would argue that it is not the absence of money which makes for an ineffective Opposition. We should beware of being too liberal in the application of so-called Short money. An agreement has been concluded and it would be appropriate for it to run to 1987 or 1988, as I have suggested. Of course, these are all matters that are considered from time to time, so the hon. Gentleman should not get too excited about it.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Royal Commission)

33. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will study the proposals made by Sir Douglas Wass for the establishment of a Royal Commission to look at questions of civil servants' loyalty, ministerial involvement in appointments and public accountability of Whitehall officials and for the establishment of an independent inspector general to whom civil servants can appeal if they consider that Ministers are attempting to mislead Parliament, a copy of which has been sent to him.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I understand that the article to which the hon. Gentleman refers was written as a contribution to public discussion. I shall be interested to see comments upon it, but the Government have no plans for establishing a Royal Commission on these matters.

Mr. Dalyell: Did Ministers notice that, with the full argeement of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), speaking on behalf of the national executive committee of the Labour party at the Bournemouth conference, committed the party to the propositions encapsulated in the question? How can anybody resist my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover when he is shoulder to shoulder with a former permanent secretary to the Treasury?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman will be astonished to discover that I find it quite easy to resist his proposal, and that of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Procedures for the Civil Service are perfectly straightforward and well provided for. If civil servants have complaints, or if matters of conscience arise, there is a system of appeal that goes straight up to their permanent secretary if they wish. Such matters can ultimately be referred to the head of the Civil Service. The existing procedures are perfectly adequate.

Mr. Forman: As the Government have been commendably self-restrained in not establishing new Royal Commissions, and as it seems clear that, when he was in a senior position in the Civil Service, Sir Douglas Wass did not favour this proposal, will my hon. Friend follow his wise policy, study it, and reject it?

Mr. Luce: I assure my hon. Friend that there is no intention of forming a Royal Commission on this subject.

Mr. Skinner: What is wrong with civil servants having a chance to appeal? Is the Minister aware that, in the past few months, there have been at least two instances of top civil servants taking non-executive directorships in private companies? They include civil servants in the Department of Trade and Industry. If it is right for civil servants, through the Government, to take on jobs in the private sector while holding down a top job in the Civil Service, surely to God it must be right for one on the other side of the fence to have a chance to appeal when he is being hammered by people such as Sir Robert Armstrong.

Mr. Luce: What is so extraordinary about all this is the assumption that there is no proper procedure for appeal if civil servants think that something has gone wrong. There is a perfectly legitimate procedure which was laid down clearly in a note by the head of the Home Civil Service, which he published at the end of February. It sets out quite plainly the procedure that any civil servant can follow if he has a problem that he wants to pursue.

Mr. Dickens: Does not my hon. Friend think this question rather strange, coming from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who was the very hon. Member who used his voice for Clive Ponting? Was it not he who tabled questions planted by Clive Ponting and which were to be answered by Clive Ponting, who then denied that he was the author? Is it possible that the hon. Member for Linlithgow is a hypocrite, disloyal, or has taken leave of his senses? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Member to withdraw the word hypocrite.

Mr. Dickens *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: I say to the hon. Member, who knows this perfectly well as he has been here long enough to know it, that that is not a parliamentary expression. I ask him please to withdraw that word.

Mr. Dickens *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: I give the hon. Member one more chance. I would be very reluctant to take the matter any further. He knows very well that that was not a parliamentary expression and I ask him now to withdraw it.

Mr. Dickens: Out of respect to the Chair, I withdraw the remark.

Dispersal Policy

34. **Mr. Dorman** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is his policy towards the further disperal of Civil Service posts to the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: There are at present no plans to extend the Government's dispersal programme beyond that announced on 26 July 1979.

Mr. Dormand: The Government frequently shed crocodile tears about the high unemployment in the north. Why does the Minister not transfer some Civil Service posts to that region? Is the Minister aware that not a single Civil Service post has been transferred to the north since this Government came to power? As the decision is entirely that of the Government, would it not be a demonstration of concern for the north if they were to transfer some jobs there?

Mr. Luce: I know that the hon. Gentleman has strong views about this and has put down repeated questions on

this important issue over the past few years. Our dispersal programme, which was announced in 1979, stands and has not yet been completed. The House will be aware that 4,500 civil servants have been dispersed since 1979 and another 1,400 have still to be dispersed. The northern region still has a higher proportion of civil servants than the national average.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is not of the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to extend some of the activities of his Department an example that we ought to follow?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I have considerable sympathy with what he said, because it comes within the existing policies of relocation of the Civil Service. Any Secretary of State considering the modernisation of his Department or offices can consider relocation in other areas. It is obviously up to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is the Minister aware that the Government's decision when they came into office not to disperse the Property Services Agency to Middlesbrough was a devastating blow to Middlesbrough and to the whole of the Teesside area? In view of that devastating blow and the enormous vacant site in the centre of Middlesbrough which was cleared for that Government Department, and in view of the successful operation of defence establishments such as the Royal Navy spare parts depot in my own constituency at Eaglescliffe, will the Minister make representations to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, so as to get any Departments being dispersed into areas like mine?

Mr. Luce: I cannot contemplate a change in our dispersal policy. I remind the House that the previous question referred to the relocation policy which allows Departments, when they are modernising, to consider moving to other regions. That is an area that can be further explored.

Recruitment

35. **Mr. Adley** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to encourage recruitment to the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Extensive efforts are made by the Civil Service Commission and Departments to encourage recruitment, through visits and other means of publicising employment opportunities in the Civil Service.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the occasional publicity given to certain civil servants could mask the fact that on the whole this House and successive Governments are extremely well served? In their dealings with the Civil Service, have not this Government achieved something that successive Governments have been exhorting industry to do, which is to replace quality with quantity—sorry, quantity with quality?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his correction. I must agree with him that over the past six years the Civil Service has been through some necessary and dramatic changes, including a reduction of 133,000 civil servants, and great improvements in efficiency. We can now say with considerable pride that we have a service that is streamlined, modern, efficient and professional.

Dr. McDonald: Does the Minister agree that a satisfactory outcome to the long-term pay negotiations that have just commenced between the Government and the Civil Service unions would greatly aid proper recruitment to the Civil Service? Will he make a statement on behalf of the Government and agree that the Civil Service unions should have access to arbitration and to pay research data, and that, in those negotiations, special account should be taken of the problems of the low-paid within the Civil Service as a whole?

Mr. Luce: I should stress that pay is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of course, facilities such as special allowances and special additions are available within the service to deal with recruitment and retention in areas where there are problems, such as shortages of specialist skills. On the broad question of longer-term pay, the proposals put forward by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 15 October provide the prospect of a stable system of future pay negotiations which will be fair to employees, Government and taxpayers alike. Discussions are now proceeding on that matter.

Minister of State, Home Office

3.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has the Leader of the House indicated to you that before the House is prorogued on Wednesday a statement will be made on the allegation made in this House last Thursday by the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) — the Minister of State, Home Office — that some hon. Members are abusing their right to make representations in cases? The hon. and learned Gentleman, referring to the system of making representations, went on to claim that "some hon. Members are abusing. I am not afraid to use that word — that system." (*Official Report*, 24 October 1985, Vol. 84, c. 420.]

The allegations involve grave issues that touch on the honour and integrity of hon. Members, and it is incumbent on the Minister either to substantiate his allegations or to resign his office. You, Mr. Speaker, are the guardian of the honour and integrity of the House of Commons, and I put it to you that the House should not be prorogued until the matter has been cleared up.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that last Thursday, in answer to a question from me, the Minister implied that some Opposition Members were abusing their right to make representations? I am certain that he had me in mind because we have corresponded on this matter. I utterly refute any such suggestion. The Minister does not like the legal advice that I give my constituents, but it is absolutely within the law.

I sincerely ask you, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that time is made available for the hon. and learned Gentleman to be forced to name the people he has in mind, to give details of his allegations and to give us a chance to answer them.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: It is similar, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that outside this House many people are extremely concerned about the Minister's statement? Indeed, many migrant families are frightened of the implications. This goes with the Minister's curious decision last May to impose visa restrictions on people from Sri Lanka. He now appears to be trying to restrict further the rights of hon. Members by referring to individual Members of Parliament. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), I am quite sure that I am one of the hon. Members that the hon. and learned Gentleman had in mind because of the nature of my constituency and the fear among many migrant families. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you ought to do your best to find a way in which this crucial matter can be debated before the House is prorogued on Wednesday.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many of us are being asked—I certainly am—whether we are the hon. Members about whom the Minister made that contemptuous reference. Unless the hon. and learned Gentleman comes before the House, we have no way of clearing our names. Many of us are, in good faith, giving advice to our constituents on the legal position, and if we are constrained from doing so because of what the Minister has said that puts us in a very difficult position. We have the right to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there is an opportunity for us to clear our names.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can be helpful by saying that the hon. Members concerned would clearly know who they were if they consulted their records. Many hon. Members are putting forward genuine visit applications to the Home Office and are saying, "I know this family", "It is a genuine visit", and so on. Why, then, are dozens of those families living at the same address?

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I add my voice in a personal plea? I am the hon. Member with possibly more cases of this sort than any other. In fact, it has become quite a joke with the Minister's office, and I have been asked, "Which one is it this time, Mr. Pavitt?" We are therefore placed in an extremely unfortunate position unless we are able to go to our constituents and meet our community relations councils with a very clear statement that it is not us to whom the Minister is referring.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If my hon. and learned Friend is to be asked to take the matter further, will he consider any cases which may have come to his attention of people who have approached one Member of Parliament and, when they have failed to get what they regarded as satisfaction, have subsequently gone to another Member of Parliament in whose constituency they are not involved so that they may get a more sympathetic and helpful hearing? Will he consider such cases before he comes to the House?

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since I was the Member to whom the ill-judged observation was originally made—and since I do not want to be left out of the action—may I reiterate the demand that the Minister should come to the Dispatch Box and name names if he wishes to do so? Those of us with lots of immigration cases to handle—there are easier things to do—are entitled to defend our record in that we always work within the law.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House will understand that none of this is a matter for me. Every hon. Member and every Minister must take responsibility for his own statements, whether from the Back Benches or from the Front Benches.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I rise in the hope that what I say may be of assistance to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House.

Immediately before coming to the House, I wrote to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) a long letter setting out the various abuses which have been occurring—and I note that a number of hon. Members are vying for the honour of being involved. I want to make it plain that I would not be cataloguing the abuses if I were not able to name names. I am by no means sure how I should proceed if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to press me on names. We are talking about correspondence between my private office and hon. Members which the writers never intended should be published. I am happy to discuss the matter with the right

[Mr. David Waddington]

hon. Gentleman if he wishes to press further the request for names, but perhaps he and other hon. Members would like to read my summary of what has been occurring, and to consider how to proceed and whether it is necessary to raise the matter with you again.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is not a matter between the hon. and learned Gentleman and me; it is between the hon. and learned Gentleman and the House of Commons. When the hon. and learned Gentleman made his allegations last Thursday, he spoke about "some hon. Members". It is unacceptable to me, and were it acceptable to me it would not be acceptable to the House, that the matter should be settled by some kind of private fix between the Minister and me. The hon. and learned Gentleman has made allegations to the House about unnamed Members of Parliament.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that it will not do for the hon. and learned Gentleman to say that he is faced with certain procedural problems. More than 96 hours have gone by since he made his allegations. It was on Friday morning on the radio that he said that he was ready, if asked in the House of Commons, to name names. A motion went down to that effect in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and other Opposition Members on Friday afternoon. If the hon. and learned Gentleman is now saying that he has not had time to deal with the procedural matters, all I can say is that he is trying to bottle out in some other way.

Therefore, I make it clear—and we ask for your assistance on this matter, Mr. Speaker—that whatever letter the hon. and learned Gentleman sends to me will not satisfy the House of Commons as a whole. It is to the House of Commons that the hon. and learned Gentleman ought to be made to answer between now and Prorogation.

Mr. Waddington: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am prepared to take advice. I should be happy to take advice from you, Mr. Speaker. There is no mystery about this. Of course I would not have been able to make the allegations, and I would not have dreamt of making any allegations, had I not been in a position to identify particular cases of abuse. I repeat what I said before: I am happy to take advice from anyone on this, but we should all think about what is the right way to proceed in a matter like this.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not clear that the hon. and learned Gentleman should have taken advice before he made those allegations? Is it not the duty of everyone in the House, especially you, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we preserve the reputation of the House?

Is it not a serious matter when a Minister of the Crown makes statements alleging abuse of power by hon. Members? Should not the Minister be answerable to the House if the hon. Members are actually giving advice within the law laid down by the Government and carrying out their function of giving the best advice that they possibly can to their constituents on the basis of the existing law?

Would not the honourable and correct course for the hon. and learned Gentleman be for him at least to make a statement about what he thinks the offences and abuses are and to go further and name the hon. Members who he thinks are responsible and face questioning in the House?

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister clearly made the implication that some of us might be embarrassed by the publication of letters that we had never thought would be published. The Minister has my total permission to publish any letter that I have written to him on any immigration case.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I have an assurance from you that it is right and proper for my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office to seek advice from hon. Members who have written letters in confidence to him about constituents before names are released? Surely my hon. and learned Friend is doing just that. I cannot see what the fuss is about.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not evident that the matter cannot be properly dealt with on a point of order? It is impossible on points of order to continue to put questions to the Minister, and many hon. Members in different parts of the House have every right to put questions. Surely the right way for us to proceed is to follow the request made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). The Minister responsible should come to the House; and, in the light of the way in which the Minister of State has dealt with the matter, I suggest that the only proper course is for the Home Secretary to come to the House and make a statement on the matter.

Mr. Speaker: That is a typically wise suggestion. I think that we should leave the matter there.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No; I am taking a different point of order.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. Against the background of circumstances of which you had knowledge this morning, may I put it to you that you may be at a disadvantage in not knowing that the last two RAF personnel defendants have been acquitted at the Old Bailey. Therefore, does it not behove either the Secretary of State for Defence or the Attorney-General to come to the House to explain the background of that £4·5 million, 119-day trial, which is a matter of considerable public concern?

Mr. Speaker: I was not aware of that information, but the Leader of the House is present and I am sure that he will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take one more point of order, but I think that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has already made the wisest suggestion.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, but this matter regarding hon. Members mentioning unnamed other hon. Members is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. I should like you to take into account what has happened in the past.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said outside the House several years ago that there were certain hon. Members for hire, he was taken before the Privileges Committee. That was a matter for you.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) was the hon. Member for Colne Valley in the 1960s and said that certain hon. Members were drunk, he had to go before the Privileges Committee, because he was not prepared to name specific hon. Members.

On this occasion, not a Back Bencher, but a Minister of the Crown has said, in the same sort of context, exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw said about some other hon. Members and without naming them. Therefore, I suggest that that is a matter for the Privileges Committee.

In both previous cases, the hon. Members concerned had to go before the Privileges Committee and finally withdraw their allegations. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that, contrary to the advice that you have already been given, this is a matter for the Privileges Committee and the Minister should be sent before it to name the hon. Members or withdraw the allegations.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think the hon. Gentleman can know what advice I was given. If he is alleging a matter of privilege, he should write to me and put the case in the usual way. That is the rule, and he knows it.

Questions to Ministers

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order involves both the procedures of the House and the Minister of State, Home Office.

On Monday 21 October, I submitted nine separate questions about visitors from Bangladesh for written priority answer. I submitted those questions to the Home Secretary, but on Thursday 24 October I received a reply from the Minister of State to all nine questions, which stated simply, "I shall reply as soon as possible". I make no complaint about that, because it is a familiar reply to questions before the information is available to Ministers.

However, the very next morning, on Friday 25 October, it was reported to me — and I have subsequently checked the tape—that the same Minister of State, in the BBC radio programme "Today", volunteered the precise information that I had requested in one of the nine questions to which I still await replies.

This raises questions about the Minister's conduct and the rights of Members on which I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. First, is it not plain that the Minister misled the House in his written reply? He clearly had the information for which he was asked and he clearly did not reply as soon as possible, as he said he would. Indeed, he has not yet replied to the questions put down by me seven days ago. If the Minister had been a visitor from Bangladesh and had answered questions in such a way at Heathrow, he would have been put on the next plane home.

Secondly, if a Minister is asked a question in the House, is it not an abuse for that Minister deliberately to withhold the information that he possesses?

Finally, is it not a gross discourtesy for the Minister to release to the BBC, and through it to the press, the same information that he withheld from a Member of the House and is it not in direct conflict with the advice that you have consistently given to Ministers?

Mr. Speaker: What the right hon. Gentleman has said is not exactly a matter for me. It is a matter for the Government and for the Minister concerned, who is here.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I certainly meant no discourtesy to the right hon. Gentleman. He will recall that he put down a large number of interlinked questions. I cannot remember whether it was tabled yesterday or whether it has been tabled now, but what was obviously required and what was considered to be most convenient to the right hon. Gentleman was to put down one answer to all those questions.

Mr. Shore: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I must make it perfectly plain that they were separate questions which deserve and should have separate replies. One of those replies was clearly available to the Minister of State when he refrained from giving it on Thursday afternoon.

QE2 (Renovation Contract)

3.48 pm

Dr. Norman A Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement reported on Friday of the Cundard shipping company to award a contract for the re-engining and renovation of the QE2 to the West German shipyard Lloyd-Werft."

In view of the imminent Prorogation of the House, time should be found to debate this specific and important matter before Wednesday. The matter is specific in that the order, worth £80 million, will do further injury to the United Kingdom shipbuilding and marine engineering industry. That industry has experienced remorseless decline, which is intensified by the decisions of British shipping companies and other domestic maritime agencies to place orders with foreign yards.

During the 20 years since the QE2 was launched on the Clyde, we have lost more than 80,000 jobs in our shipbuilding and engineering industries. If the decline continues, we shall lose the merchant shipbuilding sector of the industry and the last remnant of the marine engineering industry.

The matter is urgent because we need to examine closely the reasons for the reluctance, or failure, of companies such as Cunard to place orders with United Kingdom yards.

Finally, the nine new engines which the QE2 is to have could be constructed in United Kingdom marine engineering plants, in Belfast, my constituency or on the Tyne. Indeed, it is conceivable that the whole operation could have been carried out on the lower reaches of the Clyde. Cunard did not ask a single United Kingdom marine engine builder to bid for the manufacture of the nine engines. That part of the order is worth £60 million.

The issue causes deep anxiety to the shipbuilding industries of Belfast, the Tyne, the Mersey and the Clyde. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will give sympathetic consideration to my request.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, (Dr. Godman) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement reported on Friday of the Cunard shipping company to award a contract for the re-engining and renovation of the QE2 to the West German shipyard Lloyd-Werft."

I fully understand the importance of the matter to the hon. Gentleman and his constituents. I listened carefully to what he said, but I do not consider that the matter is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Immigration Control

3.52 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely, "immigration control."

Such a debate would allow the Government to give the House information on three important matters. First, it would enable the Government to confirm or deny reports that they are planning to introduce visa requirements for visitors coming to Britain from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan. Yesterday *The Sunday Times* reported:

"The Home Office is considering imposing visa requirements on visitors entering Britain from some Asian and black Commonwealth countries. The move is being canvassed in Whitehall as a means of clearing the immigration bottleneck at London's Heathrow airport.

Bangladesh is the country causing immigration officers most concern at present. It is widely felt that if visas are introduced for Bangladeshi visitors other Commonwealth countries in the Indian sub-continent and north Africa will follow."

Secondly, such a debate would allow the Government to explain to the House their action to resolve the crisis within the immigration service that is primarily caused by staff shortages, which the Government refuse to remedy. *The Sunday Times* referred to the crisis at Heathrow as being a reason why the Government are considering the introduction of visa requirements for visitors to Britain. *The Guardian* today confirms that the introduction of visas for visitors from Commonwealth countries was suggested in reports at the weekend. Last night a spokesman for the Home Office said that the matter was under consideration, and that was confirmed later by another spokesman for the Home Office.

Thirdly, the debate would give the Minister of State, —who I am glad to see has returned to the Chamber and taken his place on the Treasury Front Bench—an opportunity to substantiate or withdraw the serious allegations that he made in the House on Thursday. The evident concern that they caused has been reflected by the numerous points of order that have been raised this afternoon.

You, Mr. Speaker, showed sympathy with the suggestion of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that the Home Secretary should make a statement. An emergency debate would provide an excellent opportunity for the Home Secretary to tell the House whether the Government are planning to introduce visas for visitors coming from Bangladesh and shortly from other New Commonwealth countries and Pakistan. Such a debate would also provide an opportunity for the right hon. Gentleman to tell us what action is being taken to deal with the administrative crisis within the immigration service.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that many hon. Members, including yourself, were deeply concerned when the Government chose over the Whitsun Bank Holiday to introduce visas for visitors seeking to come here from Sri Lanka. You will remember also that many hon. Members were concerned by the introduction of entry clearance fees for all people seeking visas to come to Britain for settlement. The fees were slipped through by the Government during the Christmas recess.

I suspect, other hon. Members suspect and many individuals and organisations outside the House who

represent the interests of ethnic minorities suspect that the Government are planning visas for Bangladesh visitors coming to Britain and that they will do so during the period which starts on Wednesday, when the House will not be sitting, and prior to the new Session.

To avoid any recriminations that will ensue if the Government act in that way, I suggest that the best course of action for the Government would be to reassure the House as to their intentions for the extension of visa requirements during a debate which obviously is for you to grant, Mr. Speaker. The Government would have an opportunity to provide a full explanation and to take up the serious allegations which were made by the Minister on Thursday. They would be able to tell us what action they are taking to deal with the immigration crisis at Heathrow and other ports of entry throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely, "immigration control".

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter which he has raised meets all the criteria that are laid down in the Standing Order and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Orders of the Day

Insolvency Bill

Lords amendments to certain Commons amendments and Lords consequential amendments considered.

The Lords have agreed to the amendment made by the Commons:

After clause 2, insert the following new clause—

Reference to Tribunal:

' .—(1) A person on whom a notice is served under section *[Notices]* (2) above may within twenty-eight days after the date of service give written notice to the relevant authority requiring the case to be referred to the Tribunal referred to in subsection (6) below.

(2) Where a requirement is made in accordance with subsection (1) above, then, unless the relevant authority within the period there mentioned—

(a) decides to grant the application or, as the case may be, decides not to withdraw the authorisation; and

(b) gives written notice of that fact to the person by whom the requirement was made,

it shall refer the case to the Tribunal.

(3) On a reference under this section the Tribunal shall—

(a) investigate the case; and

(b) make a report to the relevant authority stating what would in their opinion be the appropriate decision in the matter and the reasons for that opinion;

and it shall be the duty of the relevant authority to decide the matter accordingly.

(4) The Tribunal shall send a copy of the report to the applicant or, as the case may be, the holder of the authorisation; and the relevant authority shall serve him with a written notice of the decision made by it in accordance with the report.

(5) The relevant authority may, if it thinks fit, publish the report of the Tribunal.

(6) For the purposes of this section there shall be a tribunal—

(a) which shall be known as the Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal (in this Part referred to as "the Tribunal"); and

(b) in relation to which the provisions of the Schedule 1 to this Act shall apply.'

Lords amendment: No. 1, in line 2, leave out from beginning to "give" in line 4 and insert—

" .—(1) Where a person is served with a notice under section *(Notices)* (2) above, he may—

(a) at any time within twenty-eight days after the date of the service of the notice; or

(b) at any time after the making by him of any representations in accordance with section *(Right to make Representations)* above, and before the end of the period of twenty-eight days after the date of the service on him of a notice by the relevant authority that the relevant authority does not propose to alter its decision in consequence of the representations,"

3.57 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 5 and 74.

Mr. Howard: Lords amendments Nos 1 to 5 inclusive give effect to an undertaking which was given to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) when the Bill was considered on Report. They provide that, where the relevant authority has given notice that it intends to refuse or revoke an authorisation to act as an insolvency practitioner and the person concerned within 14 days makes written representations to the relevant authority as to why it should not, the time limits on the period in which that person may require the case to be referred to the insolvency practitioners tribunal shall not begin to run until he has been made aware that his written representations have been rejected.

Lords amendment No. 74 ensures that members of the tribunal are subject to equivalent parliamentary disqualification in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I welcome the Under-Secretary of State to the deliberations of this small and select group which has lived with the Bill for a long time. The group is becoming smaller and more select by the minute.

The Under-Secretary of State arrives at a rather late stage. We have spent a great deal of time on this measure. It has been something of a marathon, and I think that we can offer the hon. and learned Gentleman nothing more than a gentle canter down the finishing straight. He arrives at a moment when he can perhaps make his own small contribution to what might well become an achievement to be recorded in the "Guinness Book of Records". I believe that the number of amendments tabled to the Bill throughout its stages in both Houses is likely to exceed 1,200. The Under-Secretary of State will move even more

amendments today and thereby add his name to that record-breaking achievement. I am not sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman would wish to be associated with that sort of achievement.

Despite the scale of the deliberations and the amendments which have been tabled and passed, I believe that many hon. Members and people outside the House would regard the measure as still being seriously deficient. Although I would certainly claim that in many respects it is a better measure than when it first appeared, nevertheless I agree with those, such as the National Consumer Council, the CBI and the Institute of Directors, who have all characterised the Bill as a missed opportunity and one that on present form is unlikely to recur for perhaps another 100 years unless perhaps a Government of a different persuasion were to see the need to introduce further reforms.

I thank the Under-Secretary of State for the way in which his officials have marshalled the material. It has been done in an extremely helpful and useful way, and I am sure that hon. Members would wish to express their appreciation to the hon. and learned Gentleman and his officials. We could well have wished that the matters that are being brought back to us from another place were of more substance and dealt with some of the remaining pressing concerns about the framework and shape of the Bill. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The matters with which we must deal this afternoon are essentially drafting and technical in almost every case, and so they will not detain us for long. I do not believe that this first group of amendments will detain us long either.

I welcome the fact that the Government have met the undertaking that they gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). The Opposition are pleased with this group of amendments.

Mr. Howard: I thank the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for his welcome, which I very much appreciate, and for his kind remarks about the way in which departmental officials had marshalled the information. I am particularly pleased to see with us this afternoon my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) who is entitled to the credit for this legislation and who undertook the considerable work of piloting the Bill through the House.

The hon. Member for Dagenham referred to the number of amendments that have been tabled. I suggest that they show more than anything else the Government's readiness to listen to the suggestions on how it could be improved that have been made during the passage of the Bill. The Bill has been improved.

Mr. Gould: I entirely accept that the Government have listened to some effect. Many of us would make the point, however, that it is a pity that they did not listen a little earlier when they might well have published a draft Bill that could have avoided many of the difficulties that we subsequently encountered.

Mr. Howard: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not like the door to shut on consultation at any stage. It is right, especially with a measure of this type, that consultation should be a continuing process. Of course it has not proved possible to satisfy everyone, but such a measure involves a delicate balance of interests and, inevitably, some people will be disappointed at the outcome. I commend the amendments to the House as striking the right balance.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

The Lords have agreed to the amendment made by the Commons:

After Clause 10 insert the following new clause:—

Restriction on use of company names:

'(1) This section applies to a person where a company ("the relevant company") has gone into insolvent liquidation and he was a director or shadow director of the company at any time in the period of twelve months ending with the day before it went into liquidation; and for the purposes of this section a name is a prohibited name in relation to such a person if—

(a) it is a name by which the relevant company was known at any time in the said period; or

(b) it is a name which is so similar to a name falling within paragraph *(a)* above as to suggest an association with the relevant company.

(2) Except with the leave of the court a person to whom this section applies shall not at any time in the period of five years beginning with the day on which the relevant company went into liquidation—

(a) be a director of any other company that is known by a prohibited name; or

(b) in any way, whether directly or indirectly, be concerned or take part in the promotion, formation or management of any such company; or

(c) in any way, whether directly or indirectly, be concerned or take part in the carrying on of a business carried on (otherwise than by a company) under a prohibited name.

(3) If a person acts in contravention of this section he shall, in respect of each offence, be liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to both;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine or to both.

(4) In subsection (2) above "the court" means any court having jurisdiction to wind up companies; and on an application for leave under that subsection, the Secretary of State or the official receiver may appear and call the attention of the court to any matters which seem to him to be relevant.

(5) References in this section, in relation to any time, to a name by which a company is known are references to the name of the company at that time or to any name under which the company carries on business at that time.

(6) For the purposes of this section a company goes into insolvent liquidation if it goes into liquidation at a time when its assets are insufficient for the payment of its debts and other liabilities and the expenses of the winding up.

(7) In this section "company" includes a company which may be wound up under Part XXI of the 1985 Act.'

Lords amendment: No. 6, line 13, after "court" insert "or in such circumstances as may be prescribed"

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The new clause was introduced into the Bill in this House but reservations were expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and by practitioners that the provisions could adversely affect the sale of businesses or parts of businesses as going concerns by administrative receivers, administrators and liquidators. The amendment meets that criticism by allowing exemption from the provisions in certain circumstances, which will be prescribed in the rules. Such circumstances will be formulated following discussions in due course with practitioners but will concern sales by administrative receivers, administrators and liquidators who will be under a duty to obtain certain undertakings from the purchasers which will ensure that those subsequently dealing with the new company are

[Mr. Howard]

adequately informed about the circumstances in which it is using the relevant name and are not misled. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Gould: I am content to accept the amendment. It goes some way towards meeting the proper concern expressed in Committee about the difficulties that the pre-existing conditions might well have posed to administrators and others. I observe only that this is yet one further example of detailed provisions being siphoned off into the rules, which we have yet to see. I understand why that has been done on this occasion, but it has been a notable and perhaps unfortunate feature of the Bill that so much of what we need to know about the changes to be made to insolvency law has been left as a matter for regulation.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I very much agree with the latter comments of the hon. Member for Dagenham, (Mr. Gould). I also warmly welcome my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) to the Front Bench; and I pay warm tribute to the previous Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher). My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central had just as much trouble as we did in trying to absorb the 450 amendments tabled in Standing Committee and the 250 amendments tabled on Report and he deserves as much credit as anyone for the exhaustive way in which we have dealt with the Bill. There is no doubt that he will have a willing place in any firm of insolvency practitioners, because there are probably few people who know as much as he does about the subject, although he did not know much to start with.

I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the present Under-Secretary of State for what he has said about this amendment. Concern was expressed by practitioners that the requirement that court leave was to be obtained could inhibit sales of businesses by insolvency practitioners. After all, the name was often the only valuable asset which was left. Court leave would have not only inhibited the sale of the name but limited the money available for creditors.

Practitoners welcome the amendment which provides that court leave will not be needed in circumstances to be prescribed. This at least opens the door and allows the name to be sold when it is considered safe. My hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State said that these circumstances would include sales by insolvency practitioners, provided certain undertakings were given by purchasers. The nature of these undertakings will require careful consideration. I hope that adequate time will be given for this and the very large number of other matters to be dealt with by the rules to be considered by practitioners. I beg my hon. and learned Friend to give practitioners sufficient time to consider these rules. Members of Parliament may be given two days' notice of many complicated amendments; practitioners need much more time. I suggest that there should be three or four months' discussion to ensure that the rules are workable when they eventually become law.

Mr. Howard: I confirm that it is our intention to consult practitioners before we finally draw up the rules. I would not wish to be held to a time limit, but it is our intention to give them every opportunity to comment and to consider the rules in their final form before they come into force.

Question put and agreed to.

Commons amendment: Insert new clause—*Challenge of decisions*

'. — (1) Subject to the provisions of this section, an application to the court may be made by any of the persons specified in subsection (2) below, on one or both of the following grounds, namely—

(a) that a composition or scheme approved at the meetings summoned under section *(Summoning of meetings)* above unfairly prejudices the interests of a creditor, member or contributory of the company;

(b) that there has been some material irregularity at or in relation to either of the meetings.

(2) The persons who shall be entitled to make an application under this section shall be—

(a) a person entitled, in accordance with the rules, to vote at either of the meetings;

(b) the nominee or any person who has replaced him under section *(Report by nominee who is not liquidator or administrator)* (3) or *(Decisions of meetings)* (2) above; and

(c) if the company is being wound up or an administration order is in force in relation to the company, the liquidator or administrator of the company.

(3) An application under this section shall not be made after the end of the period of twenty-eight days beginning with the first day on which each of the reports required by section *(Decisions of meetings)* (6) above has been made to the court.

(4) Where on an application under this section the court is satisfied as to either of the grounds mentioned in subsection (1) above, it may do one or both of the following, namely—

(a) revoke or suspend the approvals given by the meetings or, in a case falling within subsection (1)*(b)* above, any approval given by the meeting in question;

(b) give a direction to any person for the summoning of further meetings to consider any revised proposal the person who made the original proposal may make or, in a case falling within subsection (1)*(b)* above, a further company or, as the case may be, creditors' meeting to reconsider the original proposal.

(5) Where at any time after giving a direction under subsection (4)*(b)* above for the summoning of meetings to consider a revised proposal the court is satisfied that the person who made the original proposal does not intend to submit a revised proposal, the court shall revoke the direction and revoke or suspend any approval given at the previous meetings.

(6) In any case where the court, on an application made under this section with respect to any meeting, gives a direction under subsection (4)*(b)* above or revokes or suspends an approval under subsection (4)*(a)* or (5) above, the court may give such supplemental directions as it thinks fit and, in particular, directions with respect to things done since the meeting under any composition or scheme approved by the meetings.

(7) Except in pursuance of the preceding provisions of this section, an approval given at a meeting summoned under section *(Summoning of meetings)* above shall not be invalidated by any irregularity at or in relation to the meeting.'

Lords amendment: No. 7, in subsection (6), at end leave out "meetings" and insert "meeting".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 8 to 11.

Mr. Howard: This group of amendments relates to the voluntary arrangement procedure for companies. Amendments Nos. 8 and 9 will enable the court in appropriate cases at the time it makes a winding up order to appoint as liquidator of a company either the official receiver or a person who has previously been acting as the supervisor of a voluntary arrangement in relation to that company. Similar provisions were incorporated into the

Bill at an earlier stage where bankruptcy follows an individual voluntary arrangement and where a compulsory liquidation follows the appointment of an administrator.

Amendments Nos. 9A and 10A ensure that persons bound by a voluntary arrangement are given prompt notice when the supervisor considers his task is complete and also that they shall receive a full report on the administration of the scheme of composition. Such persons may of course challenge the acts of a supervisor before the court.

When framing the rules which will flow from the enabling provisions, it is our intention not only to provide that notice supported by relevant information is given within 28 days of a supervisor completing his work, but for a penalty to be imposed for non-compliance.

Amendment No. 11 repeals section 601 of the Companies Act 1985. That section, which provided a means of effecting a binding arrangement with creditors within a voluntary winding up, has been little used and is made redundant by the new more flexible company voluntary arrangement procedure now contained in chapter 1A of part II of the Bill. Consequential thereon is amendment No. 10 which substitutes reference to a corporate voluntary arrangement for reference to a binding arrangement under section 601 in relation to provisions governing the giving of financial assistance under section 153(3) of the principal Act.

Amendment No. 7 corrects a drafting error.

I commend acceptance of the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 15

EFFECT OF APPLICATION

Lords amendment: No. 12, in line 3, leave out from "or" to the end of line 5 and insert

"continued and references to distress being levied shall be omitted."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 13 to 27.

Mr. Howard: Amendment No. 64 made by the House was intended to translate into Scottish legal terminology what is meant by the reference in clauses 15 and 16 to execution being "commenced or continued" and to "distress being levied". The translation, however, went further than intended and the proposed amendment to it, amendment No. 12, ensures that it has a similar effect in Scotland as in England and Wales.

Amendments Nos. 13 to 17 are designed to meet concern on the part of insolvency practitioners that, after displacement by an administrator, receivers might still be held to be liable to pay preferential debts. Amendment No. 17 makes it clear that they are not liable once displaced, although they continue to be liable for their actions while in office.

Amendments Nos. 18 and 19 both make further refinements to the Bill's provisions. The first of them enables the company or the directors, as well as a continuing administrator, a committee of creditors or creditors of the company, to apply to the court for an order to fill a vacancy in the office of administrator. The second, amendment No. 19, which was made in response to comments by those who have been consulted, brings administration into line with the winding-up code and receiverships which provide statutory sanction for the giving of directions by the court to compulsory liquidators, receivers and debenture holders.

Amendment No. 72 introduced a new clause that entitled the administrator to exercise his powers, including his power of disposal, in relation to property covered by a debenture conveying a floating charge capable of leading to the appointment of an administrative receiver, property covered by any fixed charges held by the debenture holder and book debts covered by a charge. The clause preserved the security over such property by providing that any existing security should "follow" the proceeds of property disposed of as if the security, whatever its original nature, were a crystallised or attached floating charge.

However, we have received strong representations from financial institutions and practitioners and the Government are persuaded that it would be unjust for fixed charges held by a person who also has a floating charge and those over book debts to be dealt with differently from those held by other fixed chargeholders. Amendment No. 20 therefore removes from subsection (1) property subject to fixed charges held by a floating chargeholder and fixed charges over book debts. The administrator must therefore apply to the court for authorisation to dispose of property subject to such charges. He will remain entitled to dispose of assets subject to floating charges.

To remedy a defect in subsection (4), amendment No. 21 transfers the security holder's priority to any property representing, directly or indirectly, the charged property disposed of. Thus, for example, if the administrator sells charged plant and machinery, the chargeholder's security would attach to the moneys obtained from the sale and then to any asset that those moneys might be converted into.

4.15 pm

I make no apology for emphasising that amendment No. 20 effects a substantial change in the manner in which an administrator will conduct the business of the company. We have accepted the strong representations of financial institutions and insolvency practitioners that, in its unamended state, the clause puts the interests of the secured financial creditors at very great risk by enabling the administrator to use their secured assets for trading funds. They saw themselves as being compelled in effect to make "forced loans" to someone over whom they had no control. In such circumstances, where possible, they would always appoint an administrative receiver to obtain control of the secured assets even though that might destroy the company's chances of rehabilitation.

The widespread adoption of that attitude would make the administration procedure unworkable and we sought by the amendment to meet the fears expressed. We accept in practice that the administrator will, in most cases, need to obtain finance for trading from a company's bankers, but we anticipate that the institutions, having supported or consented to the appointment of the administrator, will play an important role in the achievement of the purposes of the administration and provide on sensible terms the finance required. We trust that the changes in the procedure will improve its acceptability to the present structure of financing business in this country and provide a useful additional means of rehabilitating enterprises that would otherwise be destroyed.

[Mr. Howard]

Finally, amendment No. 22 is a technical amendment which makes it clear that, in Scotland, where any hire purchase goods are disposed of by the administrator, the disposal has the effect of extinguishing any of the rights of the hire purchase owner in the goods. The hire purchase owner would, of course, still have rights to the net value of the goods by virtue of subsection (5) of the new clause inserted by amendment No. 72.

Amendments Nos. 23 to 27 inclusive are all minor drafting and technical amendments.

Mr. Gould: I am happy to give a general welcome to this group of amendments.

I wish to say only one small word of commendation in respect of amendment No. 20. In the light of the representations that the Minister has received, he was right to move swiftly to make sure that the administration procedure, which I regard as one of the most constructive new features of the Bill, was not jeopardised. Given the hon. and learned Gentleman's explanation of the circumstances as they might have been affected by the Bill as drafted, when creditors with fixed charges might immediately have appointed an adminstrative receiver rather than allow an administration order to be made, the Minister's hon. Friends in another place were right to table the amendment and effect the change. It is important that the administration order procedure is given a fair wind.

Mr. Hanley: I believe that it would be wise to pay tribute to the many bodies that consulted the Minister and that the Minister consulted over the past few months during the summer recess. I am sure that the House will bear with me if I mention the names of the eight associations because they are important particularly in the development of the amendments that we are now discussing. The Department consulted the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland, the Association of Certified Accountants, the Insolvency Practitioners Association, the Law Society, the Law Society of Scotland and the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers, the latter having the greatest effect on amendment No. 20, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

It is vital that consultation takes place on technical matters of this sort. I echo the view of the hon. Member for Dagenham that if only a draft Bill had been put forward, many of the 1,000 amendments, in a 200-clause Bill—it is only a 200-clause Bill—would have been avoided. I know that it takes time to formulate a draft Bill, but it requires the confidence of the Government in the House to deal non-politically with matters of technical content. Therefore, if a draft Bill had been devised for the matter, many of the embarrassments over the past months might have been avoided.

However, the consultation, albeit late, has taken place. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for allowing changes before Lords amendments. The Lords have changed the Bill from what was very much a disappointing if not an impossible Bill to work into a Bill that has many good chances of surviving in future. It may survive with amendment in future, but we can give it a fair wind.

With regard to amendment No. 20, in commenting on the provisions concerning administrators as they left this House, many practitioners noted that any banks which held fixed and floating charge security were not likely to allow the appointment of an administrator. It was a great shame, because the administrator is one of the great hopes for saving many businesses. This was because of the effect that they would have had on their fixed charge security, and who could have blamed them?

The amendments made in the other place have brought major changes to administration orders. The administrator is not the animal that he was when he left this House, and I am grateful. His dominion is now only over floating charged assets. That allays the fears of the financial institutions but it leaves considerable uncertainty as to where an administrator's cash flow is to come from. Where there is a fixed charge on his fixed assets, that is one thing, but where there is a fixed charge on book debts, which is increasingly the case, one wonders where the administrator's funds will come from. Therefore, the practitioners in insolvency can give the amendment only a qualified welcome. The pendulum has swung too often over the procedure for us to know whether it is resting in exactly the right place.

Mr. Howard: I thank the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) for the welcome that they have given to the amendments. In particular, I associate myself and the Government with the tribute paid by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes to the various bodies which have participated in the extensive consultation that has taken place on the contents of the Bill in general and on these clauses in particular.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 13 to 27 agreed to.

Clause 37

VACATION OF OFFICE

Lords amendment: No. 28, in line 16, after "company" insert "without reasonable excuse".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 29 to 33 and 76.

Mr. Howard: The amendments fall into two categories, those which deal with administrative receiver and receiver provisions in England and Wales—amendments Nos. 28 and 76—and those which refine the provisions for receivers in Scotland—amendments Nos. 29 to 33.

Dealing first with the amendments relating to England and Wales, amendment No. 28 ensures that an administrative receiver will not commit an offence under clause 37(5) if he has a reasonable excuse for not sending the notice of his vacation of office to the registrar of companies, and is in line with other provisions of the Bill. Amendment No. 76 is a drafting amendment.

With regard to the five amendments to the Scottish provisions, amendments Nos. 29 and 33 are both minor drafting amendments. Amendment No. 30 removes a contradictory qualification on the Scottish receiver's personal liability by removing the reference to section 473(1) of the Companies Act 1985 in section 473(2) of that

Act. The consequential amendment No. 31 inserts the relevant words into the repeal schedule to the Bill. Amendment No. 32 makes a minor consequential amendment to section 477 of the Companies Act 1985 following the bringing of the receiver's powers to dispose of any interest in property subject to a security into line with those for England and Wales.

Mr. Hanley: There is nothing with which I disagree in this group of amendments. However, in the other place there was concern that the Bill did not make clear the position of practitioners with regard to contracts of employment after the 14-day period of grace in respect of adoption by omission had elapsed. In fact, it was I who mentioned the matter to the then Minister, and I was followed by my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), who very much regrets his absence today on parliamentary business.

During the debate in the other place the Lord Advocate tried to put the minds of practitioners at rest by stating:

"Where, for example, the contract is not discovered for a month after appointment, the court will not deem adoption to take place by that fact alone."

With the greatest respect to the Lord Advocate, how can he say what the courts will or will not deem to be the case? It was my understanding—I may be wrong—that courts are not bound by the intention of Ministers in describing legislation. Therefore, if it is the intention that the legislation should not catch such circumstances, surely the amendment should have said so, and the Bill itself should be clearer, rather than hoping what judges might or might not take as being the proper interpretation of the clause.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is correct when he says that the courts are not bound by the intentions or, indeed, the observations of Ministers. Nevertheless, in assessing the likely effect and impact of legislation, Ministers are entitled to give the House guidance. The guidance given by the Lord Advocate was guidance given on the basis of my right hon. and learned Friend's experience and expertise in the branch of the law that is relevant to a consideration of the likely effect of the clause to which my hon. Friend has referred. He was not giving any guarantee as to the way in which the clause would be interpreted by the courts; he was giving another place the benefit of his experience and expertise. It was on that basis that another place was content with the clause as drafted, and it is on that basis that I commend it to my hon. Friend and to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 29 to 33 agreed to.

Clause 68

MEETING OF CREDITORS IN CREDITORS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP.

Lords amendment: No. 34, in line 9, leave out

"two business days stated in the notice and falling"

and insert

"the two business days falling next".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 41 to 48, 70 to 73, 75, and 77 to 79.

Mr. Howard: Amendment No. 34 is the first of a group of amendments consisting of drafting and technical amendments relating to winding-up, bankruptcy and miscellaneous matters. They either improve upon and give greater clarity to the Bill or merely involve the re-enactment of current provisions in insolvency legislation.

The amendments fall into four categories: provisions which deal with winding-up—amendments Nos. 34, 75 and 77; definitions—amendments Nos. 41, 43 and 44; bankruptcy—amendments Nos. 42, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 79; and miscellaneous clauses—amendments Nos. 71, 72, 73 and 78.

Should the House so desire, I am in a position to expand on any individual amendment. Failing that, I do not intend to take up time in going into detail on those matters, and commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Hanley: With regard to amendment No. 77, the Commons amendment No. 458 introduced a new subsection (1A) to section 518 of the Companies Act 1985 by which a company is also deemed unable to pay its debts if the value of its assets is less than its liabilities, taking into account its contingent and prospective liabilities. Practitioners have commented that the amendment introduced a balance sheet test to accompany the existing cash flow test, with which we all agree.

In the debate in the other place the Minister stated that the Commons amendment does not change the law but only gives effect to the way in which the courts have interpreted section 518 of the Companies Act 1985. In support of that contention, the Minister quoted Mr. Justice Nourse in Re: Bond Jewellers, when he said:

"what I am required to do is to take into account the contingent and prospective liabilities. That cannot mean that I must simply add them up and strike a balance against assets."

It remains the fear of insolvency practitioners that that is precisely what the new subsection (1A) of section 518 will require the courts to do. It is alarming that such a fundamental matter should remain a matter of such uncertainty at this stage. May I invite my hon. and learned Friend to seek further counsel on this matter? It is fundamental to the definition of insolvency to know exactly what assets are meant to cover what liabilities.

Mr. Howard: As I understand it, the point made by my hon. Friend relates to an amendment that was considered in the other place but not to an amendment made by another place in relation to the business before the House this afternoon. It does not, therefore, arise for consideration this afternoon and, in any event, I would not wish to add anything to the words of the learned judge cited both in another place and by my hon. Friend.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 84

TRANSACTIONS AT AN UNDERVALUE AND PREFERENCES (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Lords amendment: No. 35, in line 5, leave out "in the ordinary course of" and insert "for the purpose of carrying on".

4.30 pm

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 36 and 57 to 59.

Mr. Howard: These amendments modify the provisions of the Bill relating to preferences given to creditors and transactions carried out at an undervalue, both in winding up and in bankruptcy.

Amendment No. 35 has been made as a result of representations received from the Law Society. The expression

"in the ordinary course of"

in relation to a company's business has been replaced by the expression

"for the purpose of carrying on",

so that it is clear that one-off transactions in genuine special circumstances—for example, rescue operations — are not automatically caught by the undervalue transaction provisions.

Amendments Nos. 36 and 59, which have been made following representations from both the Law Society and the practitioners, ensure that employees of a bankrupt or insolvent company are not regarded as connected persons or associates for the purposes of preferences and undervalue transactions. Here we have in mind instances where persons are connected solely because of their employment. Those who are also directors or officers of a company will still be treated as connected persons.

It was not intended that the normal receipt by employees of wages and related benefits should be subject to undue scrutiny. These amendments provide that, in relation to someone who is an employee only, transactions with him will be reviewable, as they are under the present law, for a six-month rather than a two-year period. There will be no presumption that a payment to such persons is a preference and, as regards transactions at an undervalue, they will not be required to demonstrate, in order to validate the transactions, that the company or individual was insolvent.

Amendments Nos. 57 and 58 insert necessary drafting changes consequential upon Commons amendment No. 333.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Gould: Despite my best efforts and arguments, the Government and the Minister resolutely refused to accept amendments that I tabled in Committee which would have given effect to and recognised the special interest that employees have in the continuing viability of a company, particularly under the administration order procedure. I am glad to see that in this tiny respect, in the ground covered by amendments Nos. 36 and 59, there is some recognition of the special position of employees. I welcome those amendments, but I would prefer to have seen some concession on the more substantial ground.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 36 agreed to.

Clause 87

AVOIDANCE OF CERTAIN FLOATING CHARGES

Lords amendment: No. 37, in page 70, line 2, after "charge" insert—

"*(aa)* the value of so much of that consideration as consists of the discharge or reduction, at the same time as, or after, the creation of the charge, of any debt of the company;"

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 38 to 40.

Mr. Howard: It has been established in the 1965 cases of the Yeovil Glove Company Ltd. and Thomas Mortimer Ltd. that, where a company instructs a third party to make a payment to a creditor of the company, the payment is deemed to have been made to the company. The provisions of clause 87 in no way alter the existing legislation. Our initial view was that, in the light of the case law, there was no need to deal with the matter in the clause. However, we reconsidered the position and concluded that there was no overriding objection to specifying the position in the statute, as was desired by a noble Lord in another place and by certain of those with whom we consulted. These amendments achieve that purpose.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 38 to 48 agreed to.

Clause 144

POWERS OF COURT IN RESPECT OF DISCLAIMED PROPERTY

Lords amendment: No. 49, in line 3, leave out

"in occupation of or claiming a right"

and insert

"who at the time when the bankruptcy petition was presented was in occupation of or entitled".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be conveniet to take Lords amendments Nos. 50 to 56.

Mr. Howard: Amendments Nos. 49 to 56 improve the clarity of the provisions which deal with the bankrupt's home. They are mainly drafting improvements, but they also provide that, in line with other provisions in insolvency law — for example, clause 113 — matters occurring after the presentation of a bankruptcy petition are not to count for the purpose of these provisions. Therefore, any person claiming a right to reside in the property, either for the purposes of the new clauses or in connection with the rights conferred on occupants under the disclaimer provisions, must have had a right of occupation at the date of the bankruptcy petition. This is to prevent the debtor, realising that his bankruptcy is likely, from trying to manoeuvre himself into an artificially advantageous position.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 50 to 59 agreed to.

New Clause

COOPERATION BETWEEN COURTS EXERCISING JURISDICTION IN RELATION TO INSOLVENCY LAW

Lords amendment: No. 60, in line 7, leave out from beginning to "shall" in line 8 and insert

"; but, without prejudice to the following provisions of this section, nothing in this subsection".

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 61 to 69 and 73A.

Mr. Howard: Amendments Nos. 60 to 63 and 63A enable provisions to be made in subordinate legislation to assist the working of the new inter-jurisdictional clause, introduced by Commons amendment No. 383, and to make it easier for courts to assist insolvency practitioners in their duties.

Following consultation with the authorities of the three United Kingdom jurisdictions, it appears that provisions need to be made so that, where property exists in one jurisdiction but the insolvency procedures are in another, such property can be protected and claimed for the benefit of the insolvent estate's creditors but without automatic vesting provisions in relation to property in another jurisdiction, which can create serious anomalies — for example, in relation to innocent third parties who purchase land without notice of the bankruptcy of the vendor.

Amendments Nos. 64 to 69 and 73A are consequential on the previous amendments. The whole group can be said to rationalise the provisions of the insolvency law in the three United Kingdom jurisdictions and the relationships between them.

Mr. Hanley: Practitioners broadly agree on and are very grateful for the alterations that have been made.

On the commencement dates of the legislation as a whole, in another place the Minister observed that no decision had been taken on a target date for the various commencement orders. Can my hon. and learned Friend tell us at least when the date is likely to be—this year, next year or 1987? He noted that, although the greater part of the Bill is designed to be brought into effect at the same time, some of the provisions are free standing, such as those relating to the disqualification of directors, so desperately needed, which I believe now, following this Bill, might well work, and the attachment of personal liability for wrongful trading. It seems that those free standing provisions may be brought into effect at an earlier date. I believe that when they will be brought into effect should be known well in advance so that proper advice can be taken. Can my hon. and learned Friend give that assurance?

Secondly, in another place the Minister stated that the Government had no intention of introducing amending insolvency legislation in the forthcoming Session. I beg my hon. and learned Friend not to have a closed mind. My hon. and learned Friend will know, as his predecessor learnt, that insolvency law is a highly specialised and extremely complex matter. Despite all the changes, there is no guarantee that every matter is now right. Some would guess to the contrary. The Government should monitor the effect of the legislation as soon as possible and, if required, amendment should be made without promises that no amending legislation will occur next Session.

Lastly, on the rules, I regard the passing of the Bill without knowing the rules as not unlike being asked whether one is Jewish without knowing the contents of the 10 commandments. Consultation needs time. Practitioners are not full-time legislators.

I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend would wish to acknowledge the assistance of practitoners, so freely and generously given, and to obtain the full benefit of their assistance on the many vital aspects which may be dealt with by way of secondary legislation.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I should like to add my support to some of the points made by the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box.

From my observation, it was not only the Minister's predecessor who made a contribution to the proceedings on the Bill, but, if I may say in a non-partisan way, the hon. Members for Dagenham, for Richmond and Barnes and for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), and they should be commended.

Many of us who pressed for the Bill thought that it would have a speedy and uncomplicated passage through the two Houses of Parliament. We now know how wrong that hope was. The Bill was introduced in another place on 10 December 1984. Since then, as the hon. Member for Dagenham said, there have been more than 1,200 amendments, which we understand is a parliamentary record. The Bill was brought from the other place on 16 April 1985 and had its Second Reading in this House on 30 April. It has spent almost 35 hours in Committee. Cork was established in January 1977, which is a considerable time ago. One would have hoped that there would have been sufficient time for Government Departments and others to have given it adequate consideration. It is most regrettable that the House was placed in the predicament of having to deal with so many amendments because of the way that the Government introduced the Bill.

I hope that the Minister and his officials will respond to the appeal made by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes, because the Bill, without the rules, is only half a Bill. I hope that they will learn a lesson from recent months and consult widely and seek to reach as broad agreement as possible on the content of those rules. We all realise that there is a balance of arguments and interests to be reached, but I hope that the Government, in the coming weeks and months, will consult widely to ensure that the rules are as acceptable as possible to those who have daily to deal with the legislation.

Most of us wanted to see the legislation on the statute book because we were aware that a great deal of damage was being done to a large section of industry due to the inadequacy of the law. Despite some of the deficiencies that undoubtedly still exist in the statute, it will overcome some of the problems that were faced by the profession and by those industries that went to the wall and were made bankrupt. If the new procedure had been in operation, they would not have done so.

4.45 pm

Mr. Howard: I thank the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) for his kind welcome to me, and associate myself with the tribute that he paid to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley).

My hon. Friend mentioned a number of points, and I shall endeavour to respond to them. I cannot be precise about commencement dates at this stage. I do not imagine——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister need feel under no obligation to respond to matters that went beyond the terms of the amendment.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to you for that reminder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am anxious to be as helpful as possible to my hon. Friend.

[Mr. Howard]

The most likely date for commencement is 1986. I can give an assurance that notice of the bringing into effect of any of the free standing provisions to which my hon. Friend referred will be given well in advance. Although I do not resile from what was said in another place—that it was not the Government's intention to introduce any amendment to this legislation—I hope that everything that I have said this afternoon makes it clear that these matters will not be approached with closed minds. Of course, the operation of the legislation will be monitored, and what my hon. Friend has said will be taken to heart.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

Lords amendments in lieu of certain Commons amendments, Lords amendments to certain other Commons amendments, and Lords consequential amendments considered.

Clause 7

MEANING OF APPARENT INSOLVENCY

The Lords have disagreed to the amendments made by the Commons in page 8, line 14, leave out from 'debt' to 'has' in line 16 and insert

'of (or debts the aggregate of which is) a relevant amount,'.

and in

page 8, line 23, at end insert—

'(1A) In subsection (1)*(d)* above, "a relevant amount" means not less than—

(a) £750; or

(b) such sum as may be prescribed.'.

and have made the following amendments to the Bill in lieu thereof:

Amendment No. 1, in page 8, line 14, after second "a" insert "liquid".

Amendment No. 2, in page 8, line 15, after "amounts" insert

"(or liquid debts which in aggregate amount)".

4.46 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I beg to move, That this House doth not insist upon the amendments made by the Commons to page 8, line 14 and page 8 line 23 and that the House doth agree to amendments Nos. 1 and 2, made by the Lords in lieu of those amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 4.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 have the effect of providing that a creditor will only be able to use the procedure under clause 7(1)*(d)* if the debts making up his £750 are liquid debts. The meaning of the term "liquid debt" is a matter for the common law. In essence it means a debt that is of a certain settled amount which is constituted in writing by decree or probative document or is admitted by the debtor. This will constitute a considerable safeguard for the debtor and was suggested by the Scottish Consumer Council.

Amendment No. 4 restores the position to what it was previously. It makes it clear that the debtor need only deny that there is a debt or that the sum claimed by the creditor is immediately payable. That simplifies the position for the debtor.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Opposition are happy and content to accept the Government's position not just on this amendment but on all the amendments selected. I am sure that the Scottish Consumer Council would wish me to pass its thanks to the Solicitor-General for the considerate way in which he has studied their representations. That is true of representations made by various other organisations. When we discussed the Insolvency Bill I said to myself—I can put it on record now—that the miracle is that both the Bills have reached this happy state today, because both Bills were in Committee at the same time. One was subject to amendment as a result of what was happening to the other and at one stage no one would have believed that the

Government or anyone else—I do not say this critically—could have produced the sensible proposals that are contained in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 3: The Lords have agreed to the amendment made by the Commons in

page 8, line 16, after 'debtor', insert ', by recorded delivery,'.

with the following amendment—

Leave out "recorded delivery" and insert "personal service by an officer of court"

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) for his remarks on Lords amendment No. 1. What I have to say about this amendment will be in the same category. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, there were a number of difficulties in Committee when we had two sets of important changes to this area of law proceedings in parallel. It is a matter of enormous relief, not only to myself but to the draftsmen of the Bill, that we should have reached this stage of the Bill today.

This amendment alters the method by which a demand under clause 7(1)*(d)* will have to be served upon a debtor from one of service by recorded delivery to one of personal service by an officer of court. This is to ensure that a debtor is capable of being constituted apparently insolvent by this method only if he has personally received the statutory demand. In making this change, we have taken due account of the points raised on Report by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). The requirement of personal service will help to alert the debtor to the seriousness of a demand under this provision. I hope that this change will allay many of the anxieties expressed by the Opposition.

The procedure introduced under clause 7(1)*(d)* will nevertheless remain a technique that could be used successfully in bankruptcy law in Scotland and from time to time avoid unnecessary expense, allowing what remains of a debtor's estate to be readily distributed among the creditors.

Mr. Ewing: I welcome the remarks of the Solicitor-General and proffer the apologies of my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) who is absent on Council of Europe business but who particularly asked me to welcome this provision. Although it may seem a minor provision and may not be used very often, it is nevertheless very important in situations where the apparent insolvency of the debtor has to be established by a particular method.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Govan as well as the Institute of Chartered Accountants regarded it as important that the recipient should be conscious that he was receiving a notification that would establish his insolvency. The original proposal for notification by recorded delivery letter seemed to leave something to be desired. We are therefore grateful to the Government for going along the path suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and requiring that an officer should serve the notice. The recipient will thus be fully conscious of the importance of the notification. I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for agreeing to these proposals.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.

Clause 10

CONCURRENT PROCEEDINGS FOR SEQUESTRATION OR ANALOGOUS REMEDY

Lords amendment No. 5: The Lords have agreed to the amendment made by the Commons in

page 11, line 23, after '1914', insert 'or under the Insolvency Act 1985'.

with the following amendment—

Leave out from "23" to the end and add "leave out 'an administration order under section 48 of the County Courts Act 1959' and insert 'under the Insolvency Act 1985 or an administration order under section 112 of the County Courts Act 1984'."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Amendment No. 5 updates a reference to administration orders made under the County Courts Act 1959. Such orders are now made under the County Courts Act 1984.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 30

VESTING OF ESTATE AT DATE OF SEQUESTRATION

Lords amendment No. 6: The Lords have disagreed to the amendments made by the Commons in

page 31, line 7, after 'bankruptcy', insert 'or other similar orders in, or in connection with, bankruptcy proceedings'.

and

page 31, line 10, leave out 'to the same effect' and insert

'; but any right or interest acquired for value before the registration or publication shall not be prejudiced by the effect of the act and warrant or by such registration or publication.'.

and have made the following amendments to the Bill in lieu thereof:

Page 31, line 1, leave out subsection (4).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 7.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth not insist upon the amendments made by the Commons in page 31, line 7, and in page 31, line 10, but that the House doth agree to amendments Nos. 6 and 7 to the Bill made by the Lords in lieu of those amendments.

The purpose of the amendments is to restrict to Scotland clauses 30 and 37, which provide for the vesting of the debtor's estate in, and the ingathering of the estate by, the permanent trustee. As my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate discussed in some detail when introducing these amendments in another place, they have arisen because of apparent practical difficulty in applying the principle of universal vesting of a debtor's estate in the permanent trustee in other parts of the United Kingdom outwith Scotland. This practical difficulty has been resolved by means of new provisions in the Insolvency Bill which will allow for regulations to provide that the

[The Solicitor-General for Scotland]

permanent trustee will have the same rights in relation to property in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as he would if he had been appointed a trustee in bankrupty under the law of any of those countries.

These new provisions will have the effect of putting a permanent trustee in a Scottish sequestration in a stronger position than if he had simply to rely on clause 30 extending to other parts of the United Kingdom outwith Scotland. It also ensures that due account is taken of the position under local law where the property is situated and that there is reciprocity between all parts of the United Kingdom.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

Clause 68

INTERPRETATION

The Lords have agreed to the amendment made by the Commons in page 66, line 45, at end insert—

'(4) Any reference in this Act to "the creditors" in the context of their giving consent or doing any other thing shall, unless the context otherwise requires, be construed as a reference to the majority in value of such creditors as vote in that context at a meeting of creditors.

(5) Any reference in this Act to an enactment relating to the limitation of actions shall not include any such enactment which implements or gives effect to any international agreement or obligation.'.

with the following amendment—

In line 7, leave out

"an enactment relating to the limitation of actions shall not include any such"

and insert

"any of the following acts by a creditor barring the effect of any enactment or rule of law relating to the limitation of actions in any part of the United Kingdom, namely—

(a) the presentation of a petition for sequestration;

(b) the concurrence in such a petition; and

(c) the submission of a claim,

shall be construed as a reference to that act having the same effect, for the purposes of any such enactment or rule of law, as an effective acknowledgement of the creditor's claim; and any reference in this Act to any such enactment shall not include a reference to an"

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 9, in clause 17, page 17, line 37, leave out

" , or the barring of the effect of any enactment or rule of law relating to the limitation of actions in any part of the United Kingdom,"

No. 10, in clause 72, page 69, line 2, leave out "17(5)"

No. 11, page 69, line 3, leave out "and 52" and insert "52 and 68(5)"

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Amendment No. 8 clarifies those provisions in the Bill that bar the effect of any enactment or rule of law relating to the limitation of actions in any part of the United Kingdom. It provides that what is meant by the presentation of the petition for sequestration or the submission of a claim barring the effect of such enactments or rule of law is that they should have the same effect as an effective acknowledgment of the creditor's claim.

Lords amendments Nos. 9, 10 and 11 are consequential and remove the provision in clause 17(5) which saves the effect of the interruption of the limitation period on the recall of the sequestration. This is because it is considered unnecessary to do so in English law. They also have the effect of extending the effect of clause 68(5) to other parts of the United Kingdom outwith Scotland.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 9 to 11 agreed to.

Schedule 7

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS AND RE-ENACTMENTS

The Lords have agreed to the amendment by the Commons in page 87, line 44, at end insert—

'The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (*c.* 65)

3A. In section 31(2) (disqualifications regarding members of local authority), for paragraph (*b*) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"*(b)* he is discharged under or by virtue of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985.".

The Social Security Pensions Act 1975 (*c.* 60)

3B.—(1) In section 58 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 (under which Schedule 3 to that Act has effect for giving priority in bankruptcy etc. to certain debts) after the word "effect" there shall be inserted the words "for the purposes, in respect of the sequestration of estates in Scotland, of Schedule 3 to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (preferred debts)"; and, for the purposes of the sequestration of a debtor's estate in Scotland, Schedule 3 to the said Act of 1975 shall have effect—

(a) before the coming into force of paragraph 26 of Schedule 7 to the Insolvency Act 1985 as if—

(i) in each of paragraphs 1, 2(1) and 3(1), for the words from the beginning to "included" there were substituted the words "This Schedule applies to";

(ii) in the said paragraphs 1 and 2(1), for the words "date of the relevant event" there were substituted the words "relevant date" and, in the said paragraph 3(1), for the words "occurrence of the relevant event" there were substituted the words "sequestration of a debtors estate"; and

(iii) in pararaph 4, for the words from "event" to "that Act" there were substituted the words "date" has the same meaning as in Part I of Schedule 3 to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985."; and

(b) after the coming into force of the said paragraph 26 as if—

(i) in paragraph 3(1), for the words "a person going into liquidation or being adjudged bankrupt" there were substituted the words "the sequestration of a debtor's estate";

(ii) in paragraph 2(2) for the words "in a case where the relevant event took place on or after the day of the passing of the Social Security Act 1985" there were substituted the words "in any other case"; and

(iii) (iii) in paragraph 4, for the words "Schedule 3 to the Insolvency" there were substituted the words "Part I of Schedule 3 to the Bankruptcy (Scotland)".'

Lords amendment: No. 12, in line 16, leave out from "effect" to "26" in line 32.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 13, in line 37, leave out sub-para (ii).

No. 14, in line 41, leave out "Schedule 3" and insert "Schedule 4".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Amendments Nos. 12 and 13 have the effect of deleting the amendments which it was proposed to make to the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 in the interim period between the commencement of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill and the Insolvency Bill. These amendments are no longer required because it is not now intended to make them until the equivalent provisions in the Insolvency Bill relating to Crown preferences commence.

The third change to this amendment is consequential upon the renumbering of the schedule to the Insolvency Bill relating to Crown preferences.

Mr. Ewing: I thank the Solicitor-General for accepting these important amendments as it seemed unwise to proceed in the way in which the Government had intended to proceed. We are therefore grateful for the Government's change of mind.

It may seem to be an early Christmas for the Solicitor-General, but I end as I began by saying that we now have a sensible and operable piece of legislation because the Solicitor-General and his ministerial colleagues very generously exchanged with us not only notes on clauses but notes on amendments, which we found most helpful. I place on record my thanks to the Solicitor-General for the way in which he conducted the Committee stage of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 8

RECTIFICATION OF DEFECTIVELY EXPRESSED DOCUMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 7, line 38, at end insert

"and contain a description of the land to which the application relates"

5 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 50, in page 44, line 25, at end insert—

"*Titles to Land Consolidation (Scotland) Act* 1868 (*c.* 101)

. In section 159 (litigiosity not to begin before date of registration in Register of Inhibitions and Adjudications of notice of summons) after the word "summons", where thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and contain a description of the lands to which the summons relates".

. In Schedule RR (form of notice of summons) after the word "*signeting*]" there shall be inserted the words "The Summons relates to [*insert description of lands*].".."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: These amendments arise from some concern which was expressed by Opposition peers about the scope of notices of litigiosity under clause 8(8). While the Government were unable to accept the original point, we were persuaded that the present provisions on notices of litigiosity required improvement, and amendments 1 and 50 are designed to achieve this.

At present, clause 8(8), which deals with notices of litigiosity in relation to actions of rectification, merely requires the notice to give the names and designations of the parties to the application and the date when authority for service or citation was granted. This follows the existing provisions in section 159 and schedule RR of the Titles to Land Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1868 for notices of litigiosity relating to actions for reduction and adjudications. However, lawyers carrying out a search in relation to a transaction involving someone of the same name as a pursuer or defender in, for example, a reduction action already encounter difficulties in ascertaining whether the action affects their client's interest, especially where the name is a common one where only a business or agent's address is given. Even when the relevant party has correctly been identified, confusion may arise where he owns pieces of land other than the one affected by the action. While it will usually be possible for the seller of the land to prove the transaction in question is not struck at by the notice of litigiosity, this will involve more delay and expense. Previously these difficulties had been tolerable, but with the increase in number of entries in the register of inhibitions and adjudications, and the vastly increased volume of searches, the problem is becoming a severe one. Therefore, the amendments provide that notices of litigiosity, both under this Bill and the 1868 Act, shall also give a description of the land to which the summons or application mentioned in the notice relates.

It goes further than the point originally raised by the Opposition and I hope that they support the amendments. I am advised that the amendments enjoy the strong support of the Law Society for Scotland. What started as a minor point has now become a valuable improvement of Scottish law.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I am happy to say that this amendment enjoys the support of the Opposition.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 13

AMENDMENTS OF MATRIMONIAL HOMES (FAMILY PROTECTION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1981

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 12, line 39, leave out "(1)".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 3, in page 12, line 40, after "couples)" insert "*(a)* in subsection (1)".

No. 4, in page 12, line 40, at end insert—

"; and

(b) in subsection (6), in the definition of "occupancy rights"

(i) in paragraph *(a)* for the words from "not" to the end there shall be substituted the words "to continue to occupy the house;" and

(ii) at the end there shall be inserted the words—

"and, without prejudice to the generality of these rights, includes the right to continue to occupy or, as the case may be, to enter and occupy the house together with any child residing with the cohabiting couple"."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The definition of the occupancy rights of married couples in section 1 of the Amendments of Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 is amended by clause 13(2) and 13(3) of the Bill. This group of amendments provide that the definition of the occupancy rights of cohabiting couples provided in section 18(6) of the 1981 Act is correspondingly amended. The amendments will make clear that a non-entitled partner's occupancy right is a right to occupy, including all rights normally inherent in the right to occupy, and is not merely a right not to be excluded, and also that the non-entitled partner's right to occupy the house includes the right to have with her any child residing with the cohabiting couple.

This point vexed the Committee, and concern was expressed by the Opposition and by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). I hope that, without prejudice to the generality of the rights, the right to continue to occupy also allows for and includes the right to enter and occupy the house together with any child residing. I hope that this puts the point beyond doubt. Certainly it was not one of controversy for Members on either side of the Committee, but there was anxiety that we should make clear what rights were allowed for.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 18

SMALL CLAIMS PROCEEDINGS

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 16, line 8, leave out from beginning to end of line 14, and insert—

"**18.**—(1) For subsection (2) of section 35 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (summary causes) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) There shall be a form of summary cause process, to be known as a "small claim", which shall be used for the purposes of such descriptions of summary cause proceedings as are prescribed by the Lord Advocate by order"."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments:

No. 6, in page 16, line 20, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 8, in page 16, line 23, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 10, in page 16, line 30, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 11, in page 16, line 34, leave out "claims proceedings" and insert "claim"

No. 16, in page 17, line 10, leave out "claims proceedings" and insert "claim"

No. 17, in page 17, line 16, leave out "proceedings" and insert "small claim"

No. 18, in page 17, line 18, leave out "proceedings" and insert "small claim"

No. 19, in page 17, line 19, leave out "proceedings" and insert "small claim"

No. 20, in page 17, line 20, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 21, in page 17, line 21, leave out "proceedings" and insert "small claim"

No. 22, in page 17, line 23, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 23, in page 17, line 25, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 24, in page 17, line 27, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 25, in page 17, line 30, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 26, in page 17, line 32, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

No. 28, in page 17, line 44, leave out "small claims proceedings" and insert "a small claim"

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The purpose of the first and main amendment of this group is to make clear that there will be a new procedure, within the existing summary cause procedure, which will be known as a "small claim". This procedure will be mandatory for all those proceedings which qualify as a "small claim". These cases will be prescribed in an order which will set out those descriptions of summary causes which are to be treated as small claims and their financial limit. Under a later amendment this order will be subject to affirmative resolution. Cases which fall outside those descriptions and above that financial limit will be dealt with under the present summary cause procedure. This amendment also replaces the term "small claims proceedings" with the more succinct "small claim".

The remaining amendments are consequential.

Although in the legislation the description of this new procedure was "small claims proceedings", even in Committee those who were involved, such as the Scottish Consumer Council and the Law Society, are already calling it "small claims" and for that reason it would seem sensible to agree to a change which follows a usage which has probably already become established.

Mr. Ewing: It always amazes me that we spend an hour or two in Committee trying to find a new description or a new procedure. The term "procedure" is commonly understood and, lo and behold, for this Bill we have found the new terms simply by dropping the word procedure. I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for accepting what was obvious to everyone else in Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 6 made.

Lords amendment: No. 7, in page 16, line 20, at end insert—

"(4) An order under subsection (2) above shall be by statutory instrument but shall not be made unless a draft of it has been approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 14 in page 17, line 3, leave out "made".

No. 15, in page 17, line 4, leave out from "instrument" to end of line 6 and insert

"but shall not be made unless a draft of it has been approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The orders which the Lord Advocate will make under the new subsection (2) in section 35 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 and under subsection (4) of the new section 36B of the 1971 Act are at present subject to negative resolution procedure. These orders will set out the descriptions of summary cause proceedings to be dealt with as small claims, their financial limits, and the limits relating to awards of limited or no expenses. Lord Wilson of Langside, in Committee, proposed that instead affirmative resolution was appropriate for such orders. After consideration, the Government agreed that affirmative resolution procedure of a draft of the proposed orders was more appropriate in view of the general importance and interest of the subject matter of these orders.

Mr. Ewing: I left the burden of my remarks to this group of amendments because the definition and explanation of the limits that are to be embodied in the new small claims are important. In Committee and in the latter stages of the Bill's passage there has been substantial debate on the limits that are to be set. The small claims process can be introduced only when there are statutory instruments showing the limits that the Government intend to apply. When we questioned the Solicitor-General, he seemed hesitant about the timing of the introduction of the statutory instruments and the limits.

The limits of the small claims and the question of no damages and no expense are crucial to the introduction of the system. I hope that the Minister will give us some idea how early in the new Session the statutory instruments will be introduced as they are crucial to the implementation of the system.

I received an invitation, as no doubt did the Minister, from the Scottish Consumer Council to celebrate the introduction of small claims. That is a bit premature because it cannot be introduced until we know the limits. I hope that the Solicitor-General will be able to say something about that.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am tempted to embark upon some consideration about what might be the appropriate financial limits or the limits to be fixed in relation to limited or no expenses. In view of what I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept as a worthwhile concession in the direction that such matters should be subject to affirmative resolution, a more appropriate moment or consideration of such issues is in the event of the established financial limits proving unsatisfactory to hon. Members. I hope that they will not be unsatisfactory and it is better to leave the matter until the time that they are introduced.

I am not saying that there will be any marked delay in introducing them, but it would be daft to introduce a limit which eventually proved to be too low. I appreciate, and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate appreciates, that there is a desire to see the limits fixed at a relatively high level. We have received a number of representations from some bodies which show that there could be problems if limits are fixed too high. It would be fair to say that there is concern that they should be fixed on the high side, but it would be wrong to tell the House that representations have gone all one way because that is not the case.

It is churlish of the hon. Gentleman to say that the invitation extended to him and to me to celebrate the introduction of the small claim is in some way premature. The Scottish Consumer Council clearly does not think so, and, after he has enjoyed its hospitality on Friday, I hope that he too will not think so.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 8 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 16, line 25, at end insert "or".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment makes clear that paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* in the new section 36A describe three different types of pursuers, each of whom is ineligible for the services of the sheriff clerk in the service of the small claims summons, as they are not acting in an individual capacity. The three categories are, first, a partnership; second, a body corporate, such as a company; and, third, a pursuer acting in a representative capacity, such as that of a trustee. All this amendment does is make it clear they are not entitled to those services.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 10 and 11 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 12, in page 16, leave out lines 38 to 43 and insert

"to a party to a small claim—

(a) who being a defender—

(i) has not stated a defence; or

(ii) having stated a defence, has not proceeded with a defence, has not acted in good faith as to its merits; or

(b) on whose part there has been unreasonable conduct in relation to the proceedings or the claim".

5.15 pm

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment seeks to make clear the circumstances in which a party to a small claims action, particularly a defender, will lose the benefit of the special provisions relating to expenses whereby no, or a limited amount of, expenses may be awarded against an unsuccessful party. Where the benefit is lost, the normal rules for award of expenses in summary causes would apply. The wording takes account of criticisms made of the original wording by Lord Morton of Shuna.

Subsection (3) of new section 36B sets out the circumstances in which the normal rules for awarding expenses are to apply, first, in paragraph *(a)*(i) where the defender has offered no defence. This takes account of the fact that at present summary cause is used extensively for the routine collection of debts. It would be inequitable for the successful pursuer not to have expenses awarded to him in cases where there is no defence to a claim, since otherwise there would be a temptation for debtors not to pay their bills in the hope that the creditor would be discouraged from suing to recover the debt by the prospect of incurring expenses part or all of which could not be recovered.

The second circumstance is in paragraph *(a)*(ii) which preserves the existing provision whereby a defender is not to benefit if he states a case but proceeds no further with it. This is intended to prevent a defender lodging a skeletal or spurious defence simply to take advantage of the special rules on expenses. The third circumstance is in paragraph *(a)*(iii) which covers the possibility of the defender stating a defence and proceeding with it, but the defence itself is spurious and has clearly been presented in bad faith merely to take advantage of the special expenses provisions.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 17, line 1, leave out "*(c)*" and insert

"; nor do they apply".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Paragraph (5) of new section 36B(3) excludes from the special expenses provisions any party, either pursuer or defender, who acted unreasonably either during the proceedings or in relation to the claim itself. This would cover cases where it was clear that there was no proper claim to bring to court, or where a party had been acting in a dilatory manner or in bad faith.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 14 to 26 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 27, in page 17, line 34, leave out from "(3)" to "(2C)" in line 36 and insert—

"*(a)* after "(2A)" there shall be inserted the words "(2B) or "".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment in clause 18(3)*(b)* is to make clear that the decisions of the sheriff relating to remits made under section 37(3)*(a)* of the 1971 Act, which are not to be capable of review, are those under subsection (2A), (2B)

or (2C) of section 37(3) of the 1971 Act. The present drafting in the clause might imply that the decisions relating to remits may be made only where all three of these subsections are involved, which would not be the case.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 28 agreed to.

Clause 25

AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS ABOUT DETENTION OF CHILDREN

Lords amendment: No. 29, in page 21, line 2, leave out from beginning to first "for" in line 4.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment deletes the change to section 42(3) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 made by clause 25(1) *(a)*. The effect of paragraph 25*(a)* is subsumed in paragraph 25*(b)*, and paragraph 25*(a)* is therefore redundant.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 26

AMENDMENT OF POWER TO DETAIN CHILDREN IN SECURE ACCOMMODATION

Lords amendment: No. 30, in page 22, line 9, leave out "paragraph *(b)* above" and insert "this subsection"

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The words "paragraph *(b)* above" are wrong since they relate to a paragraph in the clause, whereas they are part of the text which is to be inserted into section 58E(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 32

RULES AS TO VALUATION OF SHEEP STOCKS

Lords amendment: No. 31, in page 24, line 10, leave out "valuation" and insert "variation".

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a drafting amendment to correct an error in the wording. The corrected wording ensures that, once the formula for valuing sheep stock at the end of a tenancy has been updated, the updated formula can be used only in new leases. It does this by tying the date of the lease to the date of the variation of the formula rather than to the date of the valuation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 39

FINES IN RESPECT OF DRUG OFFENCES

Lords amendment: No. 32, in page 32, line 24, after "made" insert "by the offender"

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 33, in page 32, line 25, leave out "the accused" and insert "he"

No. 35, in page 33, line 10, leave out "accused" and insert "offender"

Mr. MacKay: Amendments Nos. 32 and 33 meet a point raised by the noble and learned Lord Morton of Shuna in another place. They are intended to put it beyond doubt that in cases where an offender convicted of a drug trafficking crime is sentenced by virtue of clause 39 to a fine in addition to a term of imprisonment or detention, the court should bear in mind only the profits which the accused himself has made from the crime and not, for example, profits made by a co-accused.

As for amendment No. 35, new subsection 193B(5) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 as inserted by clause 39 as presently drafted contains a reference to the "accused". As this subsection relates to a person who has already been convicted, this reference is not strictly accurate. The subsection should instead refer to an "offender".

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I do not intend to detain the House for long. I welcome the minor clarification as a result of the efforts of another place on what can be taken into account in deciding where a fine is appropriate under clause 39. The Minister will know from our debates in Committee that we have some doubts about the lack of definition, and that there was some confusion. It was one of those occasions on which we had a change of Minister halfway through our considerations of the Bill, and there was a distinct difference of opinion, or emphasis, between the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) and the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) as to exactly what criteria the courts should apply. No doubt the courts will make up their own minds, as they so often do, irrespective of what may be said by either of the two junior Ministers at the Scottish Office.

We shall watch this matter with curiosity and interest. While we are all totally committed to the campaign to control drug trafficking, I am not as convinced as the Ministers seem to be that this legislation will make an important or particularly significant impact.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 33 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 34, in page 32, line 28, leave out from "in" to "the" in line 30 and insert

"paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* of subsection (4) or any offence mentioned in paragraphs *(d)* to *(g)* of that subsection where such latter offence involves a controlled drug as defined in section 2(1)*(a)* of"

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The purpose of this amendment is to extend the measures to be introduced by clause 39 to cover offences involving all categories of controlled drugs as defined in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. In doing so it meets and expands upon an amendment tabled at Lords Committee stage by the noble and learned Lord Morton of Shuna, which sought to extend the provisions to include class B drugs. However, the present amendment extends the clause still further to cover all controlled drugs.

As it left this House, clause 39 provided that anyone convicted of a drug trafficking crime involving class A drugs was to be liable to be fined in addition to a custodial sentence unless it was considered inappropriate to do so.

[Mr. John MacKay]

It was originally decided that the new measures introduced by clause 39 should be restricted to class A drugs to be consistent with the measures in what is now the Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Act 1985, which increased the maximum penalty for drug trafficking offences involving class A drugs from 14 years to life imprisonment, and to reflect the especially pernicious nature of class A drugs.

However, the Government recognise that large profits can also be derived from other controlled drugs in classes B and C. For example, one of the class B drugs is cannabis and large profits can be made from it. Following further consideration, it has been decided to extend the scope of the existing provisions to cover all categories of controlled drugs.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 35 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 36, in page 33, line 30, leave out subsection (2).

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 45, in clause 59, in page 41, line 7, at end insert—

"( ) Schedule *(Transitional provisions) to this Act shall have effect for the purpose of making transitional provision."*

No. 57, after schedule 2, insert the following new schedule—

"SCHEDULE

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Section 36

1. Sections 141A, 141B, 346A and 346B of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 do not apply in relation to a trial which has commenced before the coming into force of those sections; and, for the purpose of this paragraph, a trial shall be taken to commence—

(a) in the case of summary proceedings, when the oath is administered to the jury;

(b) in the case of summary proceedings, when the first witness is sworn.

Section 38

2. The amendment to section 120 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 effected by section 38 of this Act has no effect in relation to proceedings in which the complaint was served on the accused before the coming into force of section 38 of this Act.

Section 39

3. Section 193B of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 shall not affect the punishment for an offence committed before the coming into force of section 39 of this Act.

4. The amendments to section 407(1A) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 effected by section 40 of this Act have no effect in relation to fines imposed in respect of offences committed before the coming into force of section 40 of this Act."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Clauses 36 and 38 change the rules on admissibility of evidence in court proceedings for sexual offences and vehicle licensing offences, while clauses 39 and 40 change the penalties which can be imposed for an offence in certain circumstances. Clearly it would be unacceptable for the rules of evidence to be changed during the course of a trial. Equally it would be unjust, and contrary to article 7 of the European Convention on Human rights, if the penalty for an offence could be retrospectively increased or an additional penalty imposed. The new schedule of transitional provisions therefore provides that clause 36 shall not apply to trials, and clause 38 shall not apply to proceedings, commenced before they come into force. Similarly, clauses 39 and 40 cannot change penalties for offences committed before they came into force. The new schedule is governed by clause 60, and as a consequential to the new schedule the existing transitional provision in clause 40(2) is deleted.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 44

FUNCTIONS OF PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND AND LOCAL REVIEW COMMITTEES IN RELATION TO CHILDREN DETAINED ON CONVICTION ON INDICTMENT

Lords amendment: No. 37, in page 35, line 12, leave out from "words" to the end of the line and insert

""section 12 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963 or section 206 or 206A of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975""

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 38, in page 35, line 14, leave out from "(c)" to end of line 15 and insert

"for the word "applies" there shall be substituted the words "or the said section 206 applies or the recall of persons to whom the said section 12 or the said section 206A applies.""

No. 39, in page 35, line 23, leave out from "words" to end of line 24 and insert

", section 12 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) act 1963 or section 206 or 206A of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975""

Mr. MacKay: Amendments Nos. 37, 38 and 39 are consequential amendments to amendments Nos. 40 and 42 to clause 45 to which we shall come shortly.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 38 and 39 agreed to.

Clause 45

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN RELEASED AFTER DETENTION

Lords amendment: No. 40, in page 36, line 8, after "terms" insert

"and either—

(a) the Parole Board for Scotland so recommends; or

(b) it appears to him to be in the public interest to do so before consultation with the Board is practicable,"

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments.

No. 41, in page 36, line 11, at end insert—

"( ) The Secretary of State shall inform a person recalled under subsection (5) above of the reasons for his recall, so that the person may make representations in writing with respect to his recall to the Parole Board for Scotland; and the Board may, on receipt of such representations, require the Secretary of State to release him forthwith."

No. 42, in page 36, line 23, at end insert—

"(2) In section 12 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963 (supervision of persons released from young offenders' institution)—

(a) in subsection (7) after the word "above", where first occurring, there shall be inserted ("and either—

(a) the Parole Board for Scotland so recommends; or

(b) it appears to him to be in the public interest to do so before consultation with the Board is practicable,");

(b) after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(7A) The Secretary of State shall inform a person recalled under subsection (7) above of the reasons for his recall, so that the person may make representations in writing with respect to his recall to the Parole Board for Scotland; and the Board may, on receipt of such representations, require the Secretary of State to release him forthwith."; and

((c) in subsection (9)—

(i) for the words "that person" there shall be substituted the words "a person released under subsection (7A) above or this subsection"; and

(ii) after the word "under", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "subsection (7A) above or"."

Mr. MacKay: These amendments, which were prepared in response to points made in another place by Lord Morton of Shuna, seek to involve the Parole Board for Scotland in the recall procedure for children who have been released on supervision at the end of their sentence. The board is of course already involved, by virtue of section 206(5) and (6) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, in those cases where release occurs before the end of sentence. These amendments provide for the board similarly to be involved in the case of children released at the end of sentence. The Secretary of State will thus recall children who have broken their supervision conditions only on the board's recommendation, or where he believes the public interest requires recall before it is practicable to consult the board. He must give reasons for the recall and the person recalled can make representations to the board. The board will have power on receiving such representations to order the Secretary of State to release the child immediately.

If we provide these safeguards for children released subject to supervision, it is only fair and consistent to provide similar safeguards for young offenders released under supervision under section 12 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963. The amendments therefore provide for the board to be similarly involved in the procedure for the recall of these young offenders.

I would add that the board has similar functions already, under section 62 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, in relation to recall of prisoners or young offenders released on licence. These amendments are thus applying well-established machinery and ensuring consistency of procedure.

5.30 pm

Mr. Ewing: The Minister is right in saying that the amendments apply consistency of procedure, but they also widen the scope of the work of the parole board. At the moment its work is limited to young offenders and adult prisoners released on licence and subject to recall if they breach the licence conditions. I want to put down a marker with the Minister, because there is growing concern, which I share, about the length of time the parole board is taking to consider cases for parole—the main burden of its work. Evidence is emerging that the period is getting even longer.

I am strongly in favour of what the Minister has defined. If we put an additional burden on the parole board, we must will to it the means to carry out the duties imposed on it by the House. I hope that the Minister will keep that firmly in mind. The Minister stressed the point about immediacy. There is little point in saying to a child or a young offender at the end of his sentence that he can appeal to the parole board if the power of the parole board to release him immediately is frustrated because of lack of facilities to consider cases urgently. We warmly welcome the amendments.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I, too, welcome the amendment. Given the structure and constitutional resources of the parole board, is the Minister in a position to predict how long it would take to assess representations and make an instruction to the Secretary of State?

Mr. John MacKay: I could not give to the House the kind of answer requested by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I will watch the matter carefully. In practice, only a few cases will be under consideration in each year because most offenders are released before the end of their sentence. Therefore, if they have to come before the parole board, they are doing so already, so to speak. There are only a few cases which come into the category of supervision after the end of their sentence. Having said that, I can assure the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) that I will watch the matter carefully.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 41 and 42 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 43, after clause 54, insert the following new clause—

"Power of Commissioner for Local Administration to investigate Scottish Special Housing Association and new town development corporations

"(1) In section 23 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 (authorities subject to investigation)—

(a) in subsection (1) there shall be added at the end the words—

"*(g)* the Scottish Special Housing Association;

(h) subject to subsection (2A) below, any development corporation established under an order made, or having effect as if made under the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 (in this section and section 24 of this Act referred to as a "new town development corporation");"; and

(b) after subsection (2) there shall be added the following subsection—

"(2A) The application of this Part of this Act to any new town development corporation by virtue of subsection (1)*(h)* above extends only to the Corporation's functions in relation to housing.".

(2) In section 24 of that Act (matters subject to investigation)—

(a) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) Subsections (2) and (3) above do not apply in relation to the Scottish Special Housing Association or a new town development corporation."; and

(b) in subsection (4) after the word "concerned" there shall be inserted the words "or, in the case of the Scottish Special Housing Association or a new town development corporation, to the commissioner"."

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take Lords amendment No. 59, in the Title, in line 4, after "children" insert

"the functions of the Commissioner for Local Administration;"

Mr. MacKay: The purpose of the new clause is to extend the jurisdiction of the Commissioner for Local Administration to the Scottish Special Housing

[Mr. MacKay]

Association and to the housing functions of the new town development corporations. Both the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), whom I see stirring in his seat, and Lord Morton of Shuna put forward similar proposals in the respective Committee stages. Those of us who were members of the Committee can recall the interesting debate on the subject.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I explained then that the Government were still considering various aspects of these innovations and undertook to bring forward, if at all possible, a new clause for inclusion at a later stage of the Bill's progress. This amendment fulfils that undertaking. Since this is a new subject, there is a consequential amendment to the Long Title of the Bill.

Mr. Dewar: This is indeed a small but welcome sign of flexibility by the Government. When Lord Cameron of Lochbroom came into our midst, I did not think that I would see him as the wind of change in person—a radical reformer storming the ramparts on behalf of open government. I guess—I base this purely on objective memories of the speeches made by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) in Committee—that the Lord Advocate has turned out to be a persuasive and formidable ally.

There is a long history to the amendment. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) who, many months ago, first tried to persuade the Government of the value of the change. I remember an exchange during the passage of the New Towns Act 1980 in which he attempted to persuade the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment that an extension of the powers of the local government ombudsman would be welcome and sensible. Understandably, he was told by the English Minister that it should be brought up when an appropriate occasion arose. Of course, an appropriate occasion arose with the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

I think that I am entitled to be vaguely curious as to why my amendment, which was straighforward, was formidably and persistently opposed by Ministers earlier. There was no suggestion that there was a minor drafting error that required a new version of the amendment; we were told that it was not on. When my noble Friend Lord Morton of Shuna introduced a similar amendment in another place, again it was opposed. Therefore, it came as something of a surprise to us when this popped up at a very late stage, the Report stage in another place, and has now found its way to us.

However, it is not for me to be ungracious. *[Interruption.]* The Solicitor-General for Scotland had better wait. Anticipating the coming Session, I think that we may have another law reform Bill, so he had better not encourage me too much at this stage.

This is a minor but useful change. There is no conceivable reason why the ombudsman's powers should not apply to housing complaints about the Scottish Special Housing Association and new town development corporations. That has been the view for a long time of myself and my colleagues. I know that it is also the view of the ombudsman, because he was courteous enough to explain that not just to Labour Members of Parliament but to the Members of Parliament from other parties. It is good that the little anomaly has been overcome with the introduction of this logical extension to the ombudsman's powers.

It leaves other ends which are perhaps more difficult of solution. The most outstanding, with which the Minister will be familiar, is the need, in the opinion of the ombudsman and of some other people, to consider problems of enforcement and the relationship between a local authority and the ombudsman in the implementation of his decision. In one or two worrying cases in recent years authorities have begged to differ from the ombudsman, and no action has followed a definitive ruling by that official. That is a much more prickly and sensitive area which will have to be considered soon.

The simple amendment before us is a matter for comment because it has taken so long and because it pops up at this stage as a Government amendment, unexplained and unheralded at earlier stages, despite the best efforts of Opposition Members. However, sinners repent. That may be overstating it. I am sure that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute is spotless in—I was about to say his personal habits, but that might be misinterpreted. No doubt he is well intentioned in all things. I am glad that he has worked his way round to agreeing with me and my hon. Friends on this matter.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he was surprised that the amendment had come before the House, but the House is full of surprises, and the events of last week make me something of an authority on surprises.

I welcome the Lords amendment which comes a long time after the press release in which the Scottish Office said that it would be presenting the amendment. I note the pleasure on the face of the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who had a difficult time explaining to me why it was not appropriate to introduce such a provision into the New Towns Act 1980. However, we have finally got there, and I am glad that the Government accepted the advice of my noble Friend Lord Morton of Shuna.

The amendment will be particularly welcome in new towns where the development corporations are the largest housing authorities, and it will be very welcome in my constituency. I do not expect there to be many complaints to the ombudsman, because the housing authorities in the new towns are generally well run, but some people fall out of the system and the amendment will give tenants a right to go to the ombudsman. It is proper that tenants' rights should be extended.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 55

AMENDMENT OF ENACTMENTS RELATING TO SOLICITORS

Lords amendment: No. 44, in page 40, line 22, leave out clause 55 and insert the following new clause—

Amendment of enactments relating to solicitors

"**55.** The enactments specified in Schedule 1 to this Act (Part I of which Schedule contains amendments relating to the incorporation of solicitors' practices and Part II amendments relating to other matters relating to solicitors) shall have effect subject to the amendments to these enactments there set out.".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take the following Lords amendments: No. 48, in schedule 1, page 42, line 2, at end insert—

PART I

INCORPORATION OF SOLICITORS' PRACTICES

Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980 *c.* 46

1. In section 16(1) (appeal to Court of Session against decisions of Council in relation to practising certificates)—

(a) after the word "where" there shall be inserted "*(a)*"; and

(b) after the word "applicant" there shall be inserted "; *(b)* the Council refuse to recognise a body corporate as being suitable in terms of section 34(1A)*(b)*, the body corporate".

2. In section 18 (suspension of practising certificates)—

(a) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) If—

(a) an administration or winding up order, or an appointment of a provisional liquidator, liquidator, receiver or judicial factor has been made in relation to the incorporated practice; or

(b) a resolution has been passed for the voluntary winding up of an incorporated practice (other than a resolution passed solely for the purposes of reconstruction or amalgamation of the incorporated practice with another incorporated practice),

the recognition under section 34(1A) of the incorporated practice shall be thereby revoked.";

(b) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) On the occurrence of the circumstances mentioned in—

(a) paragraph *(a)* of subsection (1A), the administrator, provisional liquidator, liquidator, receiver or, as the case may be, judicial factor appointed in relation to the incorporated practice;

(b) paragraph *(b)* of subsection (1A), the incorporated practice

shall immediately intimate that fact to the Council.".

3. In section 21(3) (definition of "consultant" in relation to requirement upon consultants to hold practising certificates)—

(a) after the word "who" there shall be inserted "*(a)*";

(b) after the word "name", where thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted—

"*(b)* not being a director of an incorporated practice, causes or permits his name to be associated with that incorporated practice,".

4. In section 26 (offence for solicitors to act as agents for unqualified persons)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "who" there shall be inserted the words "incorporated practice which";

(ii) in each of paragraphs *(b)* and *(d)* after the word "his" there shall be inserted "or, as the case may be, its";

(b) in subsection (3) there shall be inserted at the end the words "but "unqualified person" does not include an incorporated practice".

5. In section 27 (offence for solicitors to share fees with unqualified person)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) in paragraph *(a)* after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, to it, and after the word "business", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or former director of the incorporated practice";

(iii) in paragraph *(b)*, after the word "business", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, a director or member of the incorporated practice" and after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iv) in paragraph *c)* after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

6. In section 28 (disqualified solicitors not to seek employment without informing employer)—

(a) after the word "practice" where thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or by an incorporated practice";

(b) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

7. In section 30 (liability for fees of another solicitor)—

(a) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(b) after that word, where secondly and thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(c) after the word "he" in each place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(d) after the word "solicitor's" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice's".

8. Section 31 (offence for unqualified persons to pretend to be solicitors or notaries public) shall be renumbered as subsection (1) of that section and—

(a) in that subsection (as so renumbered) there shall be inserted at the end the following—

"In this section, "unqualified person" does not include an incorporated practice";

(b) after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(2) Any person (including a body corporate) who either by himself or together with others, wilfully and falsely—

(a) pretends to be an incorporated practice;

(b) takes or uses any name, title, addition or description implying that he is an incorporated practice,

shall be guilty of an offence.

(3) Where an offence under this section which has been committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to be attributable to any neglect on the part of, the director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate, or any person purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the body corporate shall be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.".

9. In section 32(2) (persons to whom offence of preparing certain documents does not apply) there shall be inserted at the end the following—"; or

(e) an incorporated practice.".

10. In section 33 (unqualified persons not entitled to fees etc.) there shall be inserted at the end—

"This section does not apply to an incorporated practice.".

11. After section 33 there shall be inserted the following section—

"Privilege of incorporated practices from disclosure etc.

33A.—(1) Any communication made to or by an incorporated practice in the course of its acting as such for a client shall in any legal proceedings be privileged from disclosure in like manner as if the body had at all material times been a solicitor acting for the client.

(2) Any enactment or instrument making special provision in relation to a solicitor or other legal representative as to the disclosure of information, or as to the production, seizure or removal of documents, with respect to which a claim to professional privilege could be maintained shall,

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

with any necessary modifications, have effect in relation to an incorporated practice as it has effect in relation to a solicitor.".

12. In section 34 (rules as to professional practice, conduct and discipline)—

(a) in subsection (1) at the end there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices";

(b) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) Rules made under this section may—

(a) provide as to the management and control by—

(i) solicitors holding practising certificates or their executors;

(ii) other incorporated practices

of bodies corporate carrying on businesses consisting of the provision of professional services such as are provided by individuals and firms practising as solicitors being bodies the membership of which is restricted to such solicitors, executors and other incorporated practices;

(b) prescribe the circumstances in which such bodies may be recognised by the Council as being suitable to undertake the provision of any such services;

(c) prescribe the conditions which (subject to any exceptions provided by the rules) must at all times be satisfied by bodies corporate so recognised if they are to remain so recognised (which bodies, when and for so long as so recognised, are in this Act referred to as "incorporated practices");

(d) regulate the conduct of the affairs of incorporated practices; and

(e) provide—

(i) for the manner and form in which applications for recognition under this section are to be made, and for the payment of fees in connection with such applications;

(ii) for regulating the names that may be used by incorporated practices;

(iii) as to the period for which any recognition granted under this section shall (subject to the provisions of this Act) remain in force;

(iv) for the revocation of any such recognition on the grounds that it was granted as a result of any error or fraud;

(v) for the keeping by the Society of a list containing the names and places of business of all incorporated practices and for the information contained in any such list to be available for inspection;

(vi) for rules made under any provision of this Act to have effect in relation to incorporated practices with such additions, ommissions or other modifications as appear to the Council to be necessary or expedient;

(vii) for empowering the Council to take such steps as they consider necessary or expedient to ascertain whether or not any rules applicable to incorporated practices by virtue of this section are being complied with.

(c) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) A certificate purporting to be signed by an officer of the Society and stating that any body corporate is or is not an incorporated practice shall, unless the contrary is proved, be sufficient evidence of that fact.

(4B) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Secretary of State may, by order made by statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament, provide for any enactment or instrument passed or made before the commencement of section (1A) above and having effect in relation to solicitors to have effect in relation to incorporated practices with such additions, omissions, or other modifications as appear to him to be necessary or expedient.".

13. In section 35(1) (accounts rules) after the word "solicitors", in each place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices".

14. In section 36 (interest on client's money)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "his" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice in its";

(iii) after the word "solicitor's" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice's";

(b) in subsection (2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(c) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "solicitor", where lastly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(iii) after the word "his" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, its";

(d) in subsection (4) after the word "client" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice and its client".

15. In section 37 (accountant's certificates)—

(a) in subsection (2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (3) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or of an incorporated practice";

(c) in subsection (5)—

(i) in paragraph *(a)* after the word "who" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice which", after the word "firm" there shall be substituted the words "or, as the case may be, of the incorporated practice" and after the word "them" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(ii) in paragraph *(b)*, after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice" and after the word "practice" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it has not";

(d) after subsection (6)—

(i) in paragraph *(a)*(iii) after the word "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practices";

(ii) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, an incorporated practice which satisfies the Council that it";

(e) in subsection (7)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

16. In section 38 (powers of Council where dishonesty alleged)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "his", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice or any employee thereof";

(ii) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, such incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) in paragraph *(a)*, there shall be inserted at the end the words "or, as the case may be, such incorporated practice";

(ii) in paragraph *(b)*, there shall be inserted at the end the words "or, as the case may be, of which the

incorporated practice or one of its employees is a sole trustee or it is a co-trustee only with one or more of its employees.".

17. In section 39 (Council's powers where delay alleged)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) after the word "employees" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice or one of its employees was the sole trustee or it was a co-trustee only with one or more of its employees";

(iv) after the word "solicitor" where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first and lastly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, to that incorporated practice.".

18. In section 40 (Council's powers where failure to comply with accounts rules etc.)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "solicitor", where secondly and thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(iii) after the word "his" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, its";

(iv) after the word "section", where lastly occurring, there shall be inserted "*(a)*";

(v) for the words "and the certificate" there shall be substituted the following "; or, as the case may be—

(b) withdraw the practising certificate or certificates of any or all of the solicitors who are directors of the incorporated practice,

and a certificate so withdrawn";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice that it";

(ii) after the word "solicitor" where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(iii) for the words from "and" onward there shall be substituted the words "or solicitors concerned and shall restore to him or them any practising certificate or certificates held by him or them for the practice year then current.".

(c) in subsection (3) for the word "the", where secondly occurring, there shall be substituted the word "a".

19. In section 41 (appointment of judicial factor)—

(a) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(b) after the word "solicitor" where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(c) for the words "in connection with his practice as a solicitor" there shall be substituted the words ", in the case of a solicitor, in connection with his practice a ssuch";

(d) after the word "arise" there shall be inserted the following "; or

(e) that, in the case of an incorporated practice, either—

(i) its liabilities exceed its assets, or

(ii) its books, accounts and other documents are in such a condition that it is not reasonably practicable to ascertain definitely whether its liabilities exceed its assets, or

(iii) there is reasonable ground for apprehending that a claim on the guarantee fund may arise",

(e) after the word "solicitor", where fourthly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, of the incorporated practice",

(f) after the word "solicitor", where fifthly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice",

(g) for the words "the solicitor's" there shall be substituted the word "such".

20. In section 42 (distribution of sums in client bank account)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "(2)" there shall be inserted the words "or (2A)",

(ii) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice",

(iii) after the word "him", where first and thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it",

(iv) after the word "clients", where firstly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it on behalf of its clients",

(v) after the word "solicitor", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice",

(vi) after the word "behalf", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it on their behalf",

(vii) after the word "him", where lastly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it";

(b) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) The events to which subsection (1) applies are in relation to any incorporated practice—

(a) the making of an administration or winding up order or the appointment of a provisional liquidator, liquidator, receiver or judicial factor; or

(b) the passing of a resolution for voluntary winding-up (other than one passed solely for the purposes of reconstruction or amalgamation with another incorporated practice)";

(c) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "his", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, its";

(iii) after the word "client", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice on that behalf";

(b) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it";

(v) after the word "name" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice in its own name".

21. In section 43 (Guarantee Fund)—

(a) in subsection (2) after the words "part of" there shall be inserted "*(a)*" and at the end there shall be inserted "; or

(b) any incorporated practice or any director, manager, secretary or other employee of an incorporated practice, nothwithstanding that subsequent to the commission of that act it may have ceased to be recognised under section 34(1A) or have been wound up";

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

(c) in subsection (3), after paragraph *(c)*, there shall be added the following—

"*(cc)* to an incorporated practice or any director or member thereof in respect of a loss suffered by it or him by reason of dishonesty on the part of any director, manager, secretary or other employee of the incorporated practice in connection with the practice";

(d) in subsection (7)*(c)* there shall be inserted at the end the following "or in the employment of an incorporated practice".

22. In section 44 (professional indemnity)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitors", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices";

(ii) in paragraph *(c)* after the word "solicitors", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices or any specified class thereof";

(b) in subsection (3)—

(i) in each of paragraphs *(b)* and *(c)* after the word "solicitors", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices or any class of incorporated practices";

(ii) in paragraph *(f)* after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice" and after each of the words "he" and "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) in paragraph *(g)* after the word "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices";

(c) in subsection (5) there shall be inserted at the end the words "and, as respects incorporated practices, means any liability incurred by it which if it had been incurred by a solicitor would constitute such civil liability";

23. In section 45 (safeguarding interests of clients of solicitors struck off or suspended)—

(a) in subsection (1) at the end there shall be inserted the words "and, in relation to any incorporated practice, the recognition under section 34(1A) of which is revoked";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) at the beginning there shall be inserted the words "In the case of a solicitor,";

(ii) after the words "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(c) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) In the case of an incorporated practice, it shall within 21 days of the material date satisfy the Council that it has made suitable arrangements for making available to its clients or to some other solicitor or solicitors or incorporated practice instructed by its clients or itself—

(a) all deeds, wills, securities, papers, books of accounts, records, vouchers and other documents in its possession or control which are held on behalf of its clients or which relate to any trust of which it is sole trustee or co-trustee only with one or more of its employees; and

(b) all sums of money due from it or held by it on behalf of its clients or subject to any trust as aforesaid.";

(d) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" in both places where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, any director, manager, secretary or other employee of the incorporated practice";

(e) in subsection (5), after the word "practice" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the recognition under section 34(1A) is revoked.".

24. In section 47 (restriction on employing solicitor struck off or suspended)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

((i)) after the word "solicitor", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and, unless it has such permission, an incorporated practice shall not";

(ii) after the word "his", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the word "or, as the case may be, its";

(b) in subsection (3) after the words "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(c) in subsection (4) at the end there shall be inserted the words "and if any incorporated practice so acts its recognition under section 34(1A) shall be revoked.".

25. In section 49 (investigation by lay observer of Society's treatment of complaints), in subsection (1) after the word "solicitor", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or about an incorporated practice or an employee thereof".

26. In section 51(2) (complaints to Discipline Tribunal) after the words "client)" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice may have failed to comply with any provision of this Act or of rules made under this Act applicable to it".

27. In section 52(1) (procedure and powers of Discipline Tribunal) there shall be inserted at the end the words "or an incorporated practice".

28. In section 53 (powers of Discipline Tribunal)—

(a) in subsection (1) there shall be inserted at the end—

"; or

(c) an incorporated practice has been convicted by any court of an offence, which conviction the Tribunal is satisfied renders it unsuitable to continue to be recognised under section 34(1A); or

(d) after holding an inquiry into a complaint, the Tribunal is satisfied that an incorporated practice has failed to comply with any provision of this Act or of rules made under this Act applicable to it.".

(b) in subsection (2) (powers of Discipline Tribunal)—

(i) in paragraphs *(c)* and *(d)* after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice".

(ii) in paragraph *(e)* after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

(iii) after paragraph *(e)* there shall be added the following—"or

(f) order that the recognition under section 34(1A) of the incorporated practice be revoked".

(c) after subsection (6) (effective date of striking off or suspension of solicitor) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6A) Where the Tribunal order that the recognition under section 34(1A) of an incorporated practice be revoked, the Tribunal shall direct that the order shall take effect on such date as the Tribunal specifies, being a date not earlier than 60 days after its order is intimated to the incorporated practice, and such an order shall take effect accordingly.".

(d) in subsection (7) after the word "(6)" there shall be inserted the words "or (6A)" and for the words "that subsection" there shall be substituted the words "subsection (6) or, as the case may be, subsection (6A)".

29. In section 54 (appeals by solicitors from decisions of the Discipline Tribunal)—

(a) in subsection (1) for the word "him" there shall be substituted the words "that person";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the word "Where" there shall be inserted "*(a)*";

(ii) after the word "effect", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted—

";

(b) the Tribunal has ordered the revocation of the recognition under section 34(A) of an incorporated practice, the incorporated practice may within 21 days of the date when the order is intimated to it apply to the court for an order varying (subject to the limit of 60 days referred to in subsection (6A) of section 53) the direction under that subsection;"

30. In section 60 (offence for notaries public to act for unqualified persons) in subsection (2) there shall be inserted at the end the words "but "unqualified person" does not include an incorporated practice".

31. In section 61 (protection of banks)—

(a) in each of subsections (1) and (2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (3) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice" and after that word, where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice".

32. In section 64 (service of notices) there shall be inserted at the end the words "or, in the case of an incorporated practice, if it is left at, or delivered or sent by post to, its registered office".

33. In section 65(1) (interpretation) after the definition of "functions" there shall be inserted the following—

"incorporated practice" has the meaning given by section 34(1A)*(c)*;"

34. In Schedule 3 (The Scottish Solicitors' Guarantee Fund)—

(a) in paragraph 1—

(i) after sub-paragraph (2) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraphs—

"(2A) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply to solicitors who are directors of incorporated practices.

(2B) Subject to the provisions of this Act, there shall be paid to the Society on behalf of the Guarantee Fund by every incorporated practice in respect of each year during which, or part of which, it is recognised under section 34(1A) a contribution (hereafter referred to as an "annual corporate contribution") in accordance with the scale of such contributions referred to in sub-paragraph (3).

(ii) in sub-paragraph (3) there shall be inserted at the end the words "and the scale of the annual corporate contributions to be so paid, which scale shall be fixed by reference to factors which shall include the number of solicitors who are directors or employees of each of the incorporated practices to which the scale relates.";

(iii) in sub-paragraph (4) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "and no annual corporate contribution by an incorporated practice";

(iv) in sub-paragraph (5) for the words "a special", where secondly occurring, there shall be substituted the words "upon every incorporated practice a contribution (hereafter referred to as a "special corporate contribution") in accordance with a scale of such contributions fixed by the Council as under sub-paragraph (3), and a special or special corporate";

(v) in paragraph 1(8) after the word "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "or of an incorporated practice";

(b) in paragraph 3(2) after the word "solicitors", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices" and after that word, where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice or practices";

(c) in paragraph 4(2) after the word "employee" there shall be inserted the words "or the incorporated practice in question or its employee";

(d) in paragraph 5(2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice".

35. In Schedule 4 (constitution, procedure and powers of Tribunal)—

(a) in paragraph 9—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first and secondly occurring, there shall be inserted respectively the words "or an incorporated practice" and "or the incorporated practice"; and

(ii) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) after the word "solicitor" where thirdly and lastly occurring there shall be inserted, in each case, the words, "or, of failure on the part of the incorporated practice to comply with any provision of this Act or of rules made under this Act";

(b) in paragraph 10 (duty of Discipline Tribunal) to give respondent solicitor notice of complaint)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the words "him" and "his" there shall be inserted respectively the words "or, as the case may be, it" and "or, as the case may be, its".

(c) In paragraph 16—

(i) in each of paragraphs (*c*) and (*d*) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after paragraph (*d*) there shall be added—

"or

(e) order that the recognition under section 34(1A) of an incorporated practice be revoked";

(iii) for "(*d*)" where secondly occurring, there shall be substituted "(*e*)";

(iv) after the word "court", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or under section 53(6A) which has not been varied by the court";

(v) after the word "roll", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or as to revoking the recognition under section 34(1A) of an incorporated practice".

Building Societies Act 1962 (*c.* 37)

36. In section 34(4) (restriction on commissions for introduction of business) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "(including that of an incorporated practice within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980)".

Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1967 (*c.* 43)

37. In section 6(3)*(a)* (exclusion of certain solicitors from giving legal aid) the word "or" immediately preceding sub-paragraph (iii) shall be omitted and after that sub-paragraph there shall be inserted the following—

"or

(iv) in the case of a director of an incorporated practice, such conduct on the part of any person who is for the time being a director of the incorporated practice.".

Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (*c.* 10)

38. In sections 481(3) and 490(3) (savings for solicitors in relation to certain requirements to furnish information to Inland Revenue) any reference to a solicitor shall include a reference to an incorporated practice within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980 and any reference to a solicitor's client shall, in relation to a solicitor who is a director, manager, secretary or employee of such a practice, be construed as a reference to a client of that practice.

Legal Advice and Assistance Act 1972 (*c.* 50)

39. In section 5(2) (definition of "the solicitor" for purposes of rules relating to payment of certain charges or fees), after the word "solicitors", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or by an incorporated practice (within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980") and after that word, where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words", incorporated practice".

Estate Agents Act 1979 (*c.* 38)

40. In section 1(2)*(a)* (disapplication of Act to practising solicitors and their employees) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or by an incorporated practice (within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980) or a person employed by it".

Finance Act 1980 (*c.* 48)

41. In section 30(5) (saving for solicitors in relation to requirement to furnish certain information to Inland Revenue) any reference to a solicitor shall include a reference to an

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

incorporated practice and any reference to a solicitor's client shall, in relation to a solicitor who is a director, manager, secretary or employee of an incorporated practice within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980, be construed as a reference to a client of that practice.

PART II"

No. 49, in page 42, line 41, after "solicitor" insert "or incorporated practice".

No. 60, in the Title, line 4, after "children;" insert "solicitors;".

I have to inform the House that amendment No. 48 involves privilege.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The amendments are simple in essence and introduce a matter of some novelty in Scotland. They allow Scottish solicitors to incorporate themselves into companies under the Companies Acts, instead of being able to practise only as individuals or in partnership. Similar provision has already been made for English solicitors in the Administration of Justice Bill, and these amendments have the support of the Law Society of Scotland.

Hon. Members may wonder why such a simple change requires such lengthy amendments. It is because it seemed sensible to go through each provision of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980 making clear to what extent it is to apply to the new incorporated practices, and hon. Members will have noted that most of the amendments are variations on the theme after "solicitor", insert "or incorporated practice". We have also decided to proceed by amending the 1980 Act rather than producing separate, free standing provisions, so that almost all provisions on Scottish solicitors will be found in a single Act. The 1980 Act will, of course, be reprinted with the amendments in "Statutes in Force" and will also be easily available in its revised form to Scottish practitioners in the "Parliament House Book". Because of the length of the provisions, an amendment has been tabled to include a reference to solicitors in the Long Title.

The amendments provide that the incorporated practices, although not themselves solicitors, will in general be able to do the things which a solicitor can—other, of course, than such things as appearing in court which, by their nature, require an individual. The shareholders and directors of the incorporated practices will generally have to be practising solicitors and will, therefore, be persons who are subject to professional discipline as individuals. It will be an offence to pretend to be an incorporated practice as it is at present to pretend to be a qualified solicitor.

Incorporated practices will be subject to the same disciplinary procedures and rules, with some modification, on such matters as accounts, as are individual solicitors. They will also have to contribute to the Scottish solicitors guarantee fund and to be covered by idemnity insurance. There will therefore be no diminution in the protection afforded to solicitors' clients whose interests the Government and the Law Society agree must remain paramount.

The matter was not debated in detail in this House, either in Committee or on Report, but in view of the provisions that have already been made for England and Wales and of the considerable consideration that has already been given to the issue by the Law Society of Scotland, I hope that the amendments commend themselves to the House. It may seem odd to bring in such lengthy amendments at this stage, but this is a worthwhile opportunity to seize, and I know that it is much appreciated by the Law Society of Scotland.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 45 agreed to.

Clause 59

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Lords amendment: No. 46, in page 41, line 9, after "54" insert

"(Amendments of certain controls in relation to the provision of pharmaceutical services)"

5.45 pm

Mr. John MacKay: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take the following Lords amendments: No. 61, in the Title, line 5, leave out "and".

No. 62, in the Title, line 5, after "stocks" insert "and the control of pharmaceutical services".

Mr. MacKay: The amendments were consequential to a new clause on pharmaceutical services which was inserted in another place and subsequently deleted. The amendments therefore no longer serve any purpose and should also be deleted.

Mr. Ewing: I expected a much better and more extensive explanation from the Minister. Perhaps he had to drop his children off at school today and did not have time to get properly briefed on the background to this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) thanked the Minister for something that had been inserted on Report in another place, and I am grateful to the other place for deleting on Report something that was inserted during the Committee stage there. This is a much more important matter than the Minister conveyed with his few brief and curt remarks. The background must be explained for the benefit of the House and, particularly, the public.

The Government have been negotiating a new contract with the pharmaceutical societies in England and Wales and in Scotland. As part of that, a deal has been struck that pharmacies that dispense fewer than 1,300 prescriptions a month will be subject to a buy-out arrangement which is to be jointly financed by the pharmaceutical societies and the Government. Such an arrangement would have had far-reaching effects in many parts of Scotland and may yet have such effects if the Government introduce primary legislation to implement a contract whose terms we have not yet seen in writing. There are 290 pharmacies in Scotland that dispense fewer than 1,300 prescriptions a month, and most of them are in rural areas.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is not present. I do not make a point of that, but it was interesting to note that the day after the Government suffered the defeat that led to the House being recommended to reject these amendments, the hon. Member tabled an early-day motion — which still stands on the Order Paper, supported by a fair number of Tory Members — congratulating the other place on the defeat that it had inflicted on the Govenment and the removal from the Bill of the provisions to which the Ministry briefly referred.

I must make it clear to the Minister that what happened in this case is not acceptable. The Department of Health and Social Security in England and Wales backed away from this proposal, on legal advice. The DHSS had intended to pursue the proposal, but it took legal advice and announced that it would deal with the matter through primary legislation. I took that to mean legislation in the next Session, though that was not stated specifically. The Scottish Office knows full well that the Department of Health and Social Security in England and Wales has been given legal advice against going ahead with it at this stage, and that the matter should be dealt with in primary legislation. Once again, the Scottish Office is prepared to subject the people of Scotland to something from which the Govenment have backed away in England and Wales. In passing, may I say that this seems to be revaluation all over again.

I have made inquiries and tried to obtain a copy of the negotiated contract, but I understand that it is not yet in written form. I am trying to be as gentle as I can with the Minister. But it is important that, as soon as the contract is in written form, copies are placed in the Library so that hon. Members on both sides of the House can see in detail what the contract means for pharmacists in their constituencies. The loss of 290 pharmacies in Scotland is not acceptable.

I am not saying that if and when the legislation is introduced Opposition Members will oppose it root and branch. Although I cannot speak for Conservative Members, I suspect that some will share our view that the legislation will be judged not with regard to the interests of the pharmacists, and even less the interests of the Government's spending programmes, but on its benefit or damage to patients or consumers.

For the past three years Scottish Members—this does not apply to English Members—have been receiving letters from constituents about proposals to close the school of pharmacy at Heriott Watt university. We have sent those letters to Ministers and received the standard reply—that it is part of the Govenment's attempt to cut public expenditure. I accept that answer, but what makes me so angry is the attempt to bring the measure in through the back door. There is a conspiracy between the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the Government to limit the number of students entering pharmacy school. That conspiracy has led to proposals for the closure of the school of pharmacy at Heriott Watt university. The contract extends throughout the United Kingdom.

There is a provision to set up pharmacy committees for each area health board in Scotland and for the equivalent in England and Wales. The pharmacy committees are to have extensive powers. The committee will consist of three local pharmacists, three members of the area health board and an independent chairman. How independent is independent? It is difficult to understand who could be an independent chairman in those circumstances. The committees will be all-powerful. The pharmacy committee will decide whether an application to receive a National Health Service contract is granted. The committee will also have the right to lay down conditions and standards that the pharmacist and, I suspect, his premises must meet before the contract is granted. There would be no appeal against the decision of the pharmacy committee.

I appreciate that you have been very tolerant with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This issue is far too important to be allowed merely to slip past tonight without any comment on the background to the reasons why the Government have urged the House to disagree with the Lords amendments.

I am grateful for the opportunity to alert hon. Members on both sides of the House to what is going on. The legislation will not only affect Labour constituencies. I do not wish to be political about this, which will surprise the Minister, but the strong balance of probability is that it will have a greater and more devastating effect in Conservative constituencies—although it will affect my constituency. I wish to give a warning and fire a shot across the bows of the Minister and his colleagues. By the time this legislation is introduced, the Government will have been forgiven for dragging it in through the back door. It will be judged not on the back-door methods, but on the advantages or disadvantages to the patients who have their prescriptions dispensed at pharmacies.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) is right about the amendments having greater significance than might appear at first, but he is wrong in many other respects.

The amendments have a profound effect on the pharmaceutical business in the whole of the United Kingdom, not only in Scotland. The defeat last week in the other place is a defeat not for the Government but, sadly, for the community and the rural pharmacies. For the past two years the national pharmaceutical negotiating committee in England and Wales and its Scottish equivalent have been negotiating jointly with the Department of Health and Social Security, the Minister for Health and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

I am sure you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the small hours of a winter morning, I raised the future of the community and rural pharmacists on an Adjournment debate. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East was not present to hear it. At that time, there was grave concern, as there still is, for the future of the community and rural pharmacists. Pharmacists felt that the negotiations for their future contract were unduly prolonged, that no end was in sight, and that as a result many association members were likely to suffer severe financial hardship and, in some cases, bankruptcy. The negotiations continue. Before the summer recess an agreement was reached between the two negotiating committees in Scotland and in England and Wales with the respective Ministers. A new contract was drawn up that was endorsed overwhelmingly by pharmacists. The contract covered not only remuneration but the service that pharmacists wish to provide to the community. It is absolutely correct to say that the provisions of the new contract would have had an effect on some pharmacists who issued fewer than 16,000 scrips a year. As the hon. Member for Falkirk, East rightly said, 300 pharmacists would undoubtedly have suffered severely financially. As I understand it, there was no suggestion of an enforced buy-out——.

Mr. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Gale: I shall give way in a moment. However, provision was made for compensation for those who wished to leave the business. We know that some small pharmacists actively wished to take that opportunity.

6 pm

Mr. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman covered the point that I wanted to raise in an intervention. It relates to a difference of opinion between us. He speaks of "compensation" while I speak of a "buy-out". The documents from the Scottish Office and other sources make it clear that the buy-out was to be financed jointly by the Government and the Pharmaceutical Society. The Pharmaceutical Society would not have made the contribution expected of it unless its remaining members would receive substantial improvements in their remuneration and income.

Mr. Gale: Like the hon. Gentleman, I, too, must confess that I have not seen the contracts and, therefore, we are both working a little in the dark. However, the representatives of the negotiating committee have assured me that its members were satisfied with the options offered, and that there was to be no compulsion of any kind, but an offer of compensation for those who wished to take it. Nevertheless, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

In addition to that arrangement, provision was made to deal with a problem which was and still is escalating—the leapfrogging of pharmacists closer to doctors' surgeries. That mitigates heavily against rural pharmacists—exactly those to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. When a pharmacist opens a shop he takes business from another pharmacist half a mile from the surgery, who in turn has a choice either to move closer to the surgery or to go to the wall. The poor rural pharmacist and genuine community pharmacist who provide extremely valuable service—as I serve a partly rural constituency I am well aware of this—are in dire trouble. They came to me mid-winter last year seeking assistance because their foreseeable future, if not destroyed, had been severely threatened by the failure to pass the legislation.

In addition to the agreements, the Department and the Scottish Office decided to introduce through the family practitioner committee and the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee in Scotland regulations to allow those respective committees to license, not existing, but new pharmacies, to put an end to leapfrogging and to prevent the further extension of what is rapidly becoming nonsense for the Health Service and those who seek to practise. This clause would have dealt with that.

A relevant side issue is that the result of the negotiations would have meant a £4 million a year saving for the Health Service. That sum was to be ploughed back into exactly the kind of further benefits which pharmacists wished, and still wish, to provide—counselling services, assistant pharmacists, and other benefits for the entire community, rural and otherwise. That agreement was reached for Scotland, England and Wales prior to the summer recess, and pharmacists confidently expected that those regulations would be in force by now.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Health took further legal advice and decided that he did not have the power to introduce the regulations. My hon. Friend the Scottish Minister with responsibility for health took advantage of the legislation before the House to have introduced in the other place a clause which would at least have given the Scottish Office the power to allow Scottish pharmacists to take the lead, as Scotland so often does. In that way the new contract would at least have been introduced in Scotland. However, because of the machinations of Lord Ross and others the baby has been thrown out with the bath water, and Scottish pharmacists will not only not get their new contract, which has been under negotiation for two years, as has the English and Welsh one, but will not even be brought into line with United Kingdom legislation. As I said, that is a defeat not for the Government, but for pharmacists and, therefore, the communities that they serve.

If my hon. Friend the Minister bumps into the Secretary of State for Social Services, will he mention that hon. Members who represent English and Welsh constituencies are worried at the outcome of the matter, and wait with bated breath to know what new moves will be taken to resolve the negotiating difficulties that pharmacists face? Will my hon. Friend be kind enough to tell the House tonight how he and his Department propose to resolve the problem for the Scottish pharmacists who have been badly let down in another place?

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In the narrow issue before the House I agree with the Minister that we should disagree with the Lords amendment. This is merely a tidying up matter, consequential on the main vote of the other place last week. I am informed that, apart from the Lord Advocate, no one was prepared to speak in favour of the clause.

The hon. Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) told the House why the step taken in the other place was correct. It appears that the Department decided that the matter could not be dealt with during the present Session, and probably required primary legislation, and that Scotland would be bounced into accepting the measure through a late amendment tabled in the other place. Although the matter is being debated this evening, it is not subject to the scrutiny that would have occurred if it had been part of the original Bill. It would have been extensively debated on Second Reading, in Committee—members of the Committee will agree that on the whole our debates were constructive—and on Report before reaching the other place.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North made it clear that the measures were important and wide-ranging. He accepted the principal criticism of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East that the proposals would hit hard pharmacists in sparsely populated rural areas such as the one I represent. In Orkney and Shetland, where there are no pharmacists for many miles, doctors must already dispense prescriptions. I continue to receive letters from those doctors. The limited list has put them in an invidious position, and they find that they must prescribe privately for patients when the drug that a patient requires is not on the list. Many doctors find that wholly unacceptable, and it goes against the grain. That serves to illustrate the important consequences which would have followed had the amendment not been defeated in another place. I believe that it is incumbent on the Minister to tell us what the Government's intentions are and not to leave us with his brief but correct opening remarks.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I shall be brief in speaking in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). The decision that was taken in another place will have far-reaching implications. I shall not deal with Scottish matters because I know that the problems are different there.

If the contract applied to the issuing of new NHS pharmacy contracts, the many small pharmacists who it is

thought might lose their pharmacies would be reduced considerably. I know that in England and Wales the numbers are low—they amount to 30 or 40—but the figures that have been quoted for Scotland are extremely high. I accept that there may be special considerations when dealing with Scotland.

It would seem that the problem is acute. The negotiations that have taken place to try to secure agreement on the contracts were approved unanimously by the general council of the Pharmaceutical Society, which included Scottish interests. It is important that we achieve some resolution of what will be an ongoing problem throughout Scotland, England and Wales.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will give us some inkling of the Government's intentions. The objectives are to secure a better use of NHS resources and a properly controlled network of pharmacies throughout the country, and to overcome the difficulties which have developed over the years, especially with rural pharmacies. I hope that my hon. Friend will give a fuller explanation of the Government's legislative plans.

Mr. John MacKay: As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said, I did not say too much in my remarks when asking the House to disagree with the Lords in the amendment. The amendments that we are discussing are extremely small or limited and arise because I am not asking the House to agree with the amendments which were made in another place. Their Lordships chose not to accept the Government's invitation to amend these provisions in a certain way when the Bill was before them.

As there has been a discussion this evening, I shall say a few words about the amendments. My hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) have a greater grasp of the issue than the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has decided to keep his options open by telling the House that he was not exactly asking the Opposition to vote against any legislation that will be forthcoming.

The principle of the clause, which was defeated in another place, was to provide the Secretary of State for Scotland with the power to make regulations modifying the health boards' obligation to admit to their pharmaceutical lists every qualified person who asks for admission. That was what the clause provided. If that clause had been passed in another place, any regulations made under it would have been subject to the negative resolution procedure and thus the House would have been able to debate the regulations. I do not think that we were rushing through Parliament a proposal that would have prevented the regulations from being discussed. The regulations were the all-important factor.

6.15 pm

I think that all Scottish Members received a letter from the Pharmaceutical General Council of Scotland dated 18 October. Colin Virden, the secretary, wrote:

"the proposals in the Minister's new contract package have the unanimous support of the Pharmaceutical General Council, which represents retail pharmacists throughout Scotland".

Equally, the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, Scottish Department, has confirmed support for the proposed legislation, which it considers would be greatly to the benefit of both the public and the profession in Scotland.

The new contract provides for compensation to small pharmacies which are uneconomical from the point of view of the contractor and from that of the Health Service which are run by pharmacists who wish to terminate their NHS contracts. There would have been provision for compensation. That could have been done, but in the absence of the clause that we invited those in another place to insert there was a danger that someone could have taken compensation and then applied for automatic readmission to the lists. I do not think that hon. Members, especially those on the Opposition Benches, who are for ever telling us how important the Health Service is, would want to see NHS resources used in that wasteful manner.

The Government and the profession have a shared commitment to providing an NHS pharmaceutical service where it best meets the needs of the patients. We believe that the proposed new contract arrangements would have done that. We contend that they would have ensured a network of pharmacies where necessary and in a way that would be desirable for patient care without extravagant use of NHS resources.

The greatest misconception was voiced by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, who said that all rural pharmacies would suffer. That is not so. There would be safeguards covering the financing of essential small pharmacies, which are mainly but not exclusively in rural areas, by means of special funding arrangements. As my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North said, the idea of making admission to the lists non-automatic was to prevent leapfrogging, which can affect adversely the small pharmacies about which many hon. Members are worried.

Mr. Ewing: I am sure that the Minister would not want to mislead the House. However, he is giving the impression that the arrangements for essential pharmacies are contained in the new contract without explaining that for a considerable time there have been arrangements to finance essential pharmacies through the essential pharmacy allowance. Those arrangements are to continue and they are not part of the new contract. No one should be under any misapprehension about that.

Mr. MacKay: I am not denying that. I did not imply that those arrangements did not exist. However, the accusation has been made that if the new contract came into being the protection of and help for small rural pharmacies would no longer exist. I am saying that that is not true. The financing of essential rural services would be continued by means of special funding arrangements.

My hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North and for Exeter want to know what the Government intend to do in the situation in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and I find ourselves. We remain fully committed to the recent agreements on a new NHS contract for community pharmacists. We intend to introduce at the earliest possible opportunity the legislation that is necessary to control entry to the pharmaceutical list. Any new legislation will cover the agreements reached in England and Wales and those in Scotland and Northern Ireland. I cannot predict when it will be possible to introduce such legislation.

Question put and disagreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 47, in page 41, line 9, after "28" insert "and 28B".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 56, in page 48, line 32, at end insert—

"The Representation of the People Act 1985 *(c.* 50)

28B. In Schedule 4, in paragraph 61*(b)* (amendments of the Representation of the People Act 1983 relating to time limit for prosecutions) after the word "without" there shall be inserted the word "undue"."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Amendment No. 56 corrects a mistake in paragraph 61*(b)* of schedule 4 to the Representation of the People Act 1985. Amendment No. 47 is consequential to that.

Section 61*(b)* substitutes a new subsection (2) in section 176 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. New section 176(2) refers, in its application to Scotland, to the execution of a warrant "without delay" instead of "without undue delay", which is the wording used in section 331 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 from which the new section is derived. The amendment converts the reference to "without undue delay" to be consistent with the wording in the 1975 Act.

Paragraph 61*(b)* of schedule 4 to the 1985 Act, as enacted, came into operation on 1 October 1985. The amendment to clause 59 of the Bill provides for this amendment to come into operation as soon as practicable after 1 October.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 1

Amendments of Legal Aid and Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1949 and Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980

Lords amendment agreed to: No. 48, in page 42, line 2, at end insert—

PART I

INCORPORATION OF SOLICITORS' PRACTICES

Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980 *c.* 46

1. In section 16(1) (appeal to Court of Session against decisions of Council in relation to practising certificates)—

(a) after the word "where" there shall be inserted "*(a)*"; and

(b) after the word "applicant" there shall be inserted "; *(b)* the Council refuse to recognise a body corporate as being suitable in terms of section 34(1A)*(b)*, the body corporate".

2. In section 18 (suspension of practising certificates)—

(a) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) If—

(a) an administration or winding up order, or an appointment of a provisional liquidator, liquidator, receiver or judicial factor has been made in relation to the incorporated practice; or

(b) a resolution has been passed for the voluntary winding up of an incorporated practice (other than a resolution passed solely for the purposes of reconstruction or amalgamation of the incorporated practice with another incorporated practice),

the recognition under section 34(1A) of the incorporated practice shall be thereby revoked.";

(b) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) On the occurrence of the circumstances mentioned in—

(a) paragraph *(a)* of subsection (1A), the administrator, provisional liquidator, liquidator, receiver or, as the case may be, judicial factor appointed in relation to the incorporated practice;

(b) paragraph *(b)* of subsection (1A), the incorporated practice

shall immediately intimate that fact to the Council.".

3. In section 21(3) (definition of "consultant" in relation to requirement upon consultants to hold practising certificates)—

(a) after the word "who" there shall be inserted "*(a)*";

(b) after the word "name", where thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted—

"*(b)* not being a director of an incorporated practice, causes or permits his name to be associated with that incorporated practice,".

4. In section 26 (offence for solicitors to act as agents for unqualified persons)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "who" there shall be inserted the words "incorporated practice which";

(ii) in each of paragraphs *(b)* and *(d)* after the word "his" there shall be inserted "or, as the case may be, its";

(b) in subsection (3) there shall be inserted at the end the words "but "unqualified person" does not include an incorporated practice".

5. In section 27 (offence for solicitors to share fees with unqualified person)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) in paragraph *(a)* after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, to it, and after the word "business", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or former director of the incorporated practice";

(iii) in paragraph *(b)*, after the word "business", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, a director or member of the incorporated practice" and after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iv) in paragraph *c)* after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

6. In section 28 (disqualified solicitors not to seek employment without informing employer)—

(a) after the word "practice" where thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or by an incorporated practice";

(b) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

7. In section 30 (liability for fees of another solicitor)—

(a) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(b) after that word, where secondly and thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(c) after the word "he" in each place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(d) after the word "solicitor's" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice's".

8. Section 31 (offence for unqualified persons to pretend to be solicitors or notaries public) shall be renumbered as subsection (1) of that section and—

(a) in that subsection (as so renumbered) there shall be inserted at the end the following—

"In this section, "unqualified person" does not include an incorporated practice";

(b) after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(2) Any person (including a body corporate) who either by himself or together with others, wilfully and falsely—

(a) pretends to be an incorporated practice;

(b) takes or uses any name, title, addition or description implying that he is an incorporated practice,

shall be guilty of an offence.

(3) Where an offence under this section which has been committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to be attributable to any neglect on the part of, the director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate, or any person purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the body corporate shall be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.".

9. In section 32(2) (persons to whom offence of preparing certain documents does not apply) there shall be inserted at the end the following—"; or

(e) an incorporated practice.".

10. In section 33 (unqualified persons not entitled to fees etc.) there shall be inserted at the end—

"This section does not apply to an incorporated practice.".

11. After section 33 there shall be inserted the following section—

"Privilege of incorporated practices from disclosure etc.

33A.—(1) Any communication made to or by an incorporated practice in the course of its acting as such for a client shall in any legal proceedings be privileged from disclosure in like manner as if the body had at all material times been a solicitor acting for the client.

(2) Any enactment or instrument making special provision in relation to a solicitor or other legal representative as to the disclosure of information, or as to the production, seizure or removal of documents, with respect to which a claim to professional privilege could be maintained shall, with any necessary modifications, have effect in relation to an incorporated practice as it has effect in relation to a solicitor.".

12. In section 34 (rules as to professional practice, conduct and discipline)—

(a) in subsection (1) at the end there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices";

(b) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) Rules made under this section may—

(a) provide as to the management and control by—

(i) solicitors holding practising certificates or their executors;

(ii) other incorporated practices

of bodies corporate carrying on businesses consisting of the provision of professional services such as are provided by individuals and firms practising as solicitors being bodies the membership of which is restricted to such solicitors, executors and other incorporated practices;

(b) prescribe the circumstances in which such bodies may be recognised by the Council as being suitable to undertake the provision of any such services;

(c) prescribe the conditions which (subject to any exceptions provided by the rules) must at all times be satisfied by bodies corporate so recognised if they are to remain so recognised (which bodies, when and for so long as so recognised, are in this Act referred to as "incorporated practices");

(d) regulate the conduct of the affairs of incorporated practices; and

(e) provide—

(i) for the manner and form in which applications for recognition under this section are to be made, and for the payment of fees in connection with such applications;

(ii) for regulating the names that may be used by incorporated practices;

(iii) as to the period for which any recognition granted under this section shall (subject to the provisions of this Act) remain in force;

(iv) for the revocation of any such recognition on the grounds that it was granted as a result of any error or fraud;

(v) for the keeping by the Society of a list containing the names and places of business of all incorporated practices and for the information contained in any such list to be available for inspection;

(vi) for rules made under any provision of this Act to have effect in relation to incorporated practices with such additions, ommissions or other modifications as appear to the Council to be necessary or expedient;

(vii) for empowering the Council to take such steps as they consider necessary or expedient to ascertain whether or not any rules applicable to incorporated practices by virtue of this section are being complied with.

(c) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) A certificate purporting to be signed by an officer of the Society and stating that any body corporate is or is not an incorporated practice shall, unless the contrary is proved, be sufficient evidence of that fact.

(4B) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Secretary of State may, by order made by statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament, provide for any enactment or instrument passed or made before the commencement of section (1A) above and having effect in relation to solicitors to have effect in relation to incorporated practices with such additions, omissions, or other modifications as appear to him to be necessary or expedient.".

13. In section 35(1) (accounts rules) after the word "solicitors", in each place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices".

14. In section 36 (interest on client's money)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "his" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice in its";

(iii) after the word "solicitor's" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice's";

(b) in subsection (2) after the word 'solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(c) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "solicitor", where lastly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(iii) after the word "his" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, its";

(d) in subsection (4) after the word "client" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice and its client".

15. In section 37 (accountant's certificates)—

(a) in subsection (2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (3) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or of an incorporated practice";

(c) in subsection (5)—

(i) in paragraph *(a)* after the word "who" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice which", after the word "firm" there shall be substituted the words "or, as the case may be, of the incorporated practice" and after the word "them" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(ii) in paragraph *(b)*, after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice" and after the word "practice" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it has not";

(d) after subsection (6)—

(i) in paragraph *(a)*(iii) after the word "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practices";

(ii) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, an incorporated practice which satisfies the Council that it";

(e) in subsection (7)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

16. In section 38 (powers of Council where dishonesty alleged)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "his", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice or any employee thereof";

(ii) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, such incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) in paragraph *(a)*, there shall be inserted at the end the words "or, as the case may be, such incorporated practice";

(ii) in paragraph *(b)*, there shall be inserted at the end the words "or, as the case may be, of which the incorporated practice or one of its employees is a sole trustee or it is a co-trustee only with one or more of its employees.".

17. In section 39 (Council's powers where delay alleged)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) after the word "employees" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice or one of its employees was the sole trustee or it was a co-trustee only with one or more of its employees";

(iv) after the word "solicitor" where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first and lastly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) after the word "firm" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, to that incorporated practice.".

18. In section 40 (Council's powers where failure to comply with accounts rules etc.)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "solicitor", where secondly and thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(iii) after the word "his" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, its";

(iv) after the word "section", where lastly occurring, there shall be inserted "*(a)*";

(v) for the words "and the certificate" there shall be substituted the following "; or, as the case may be—

(b) withdraw the practising certificate or certificates of any or all of the solicitors who are directors of the incorporated practice,

and a certificate so withdrawn";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice that it";

(ii) after the word "solicitor" where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(iii) for the words from "and" onward there shall be substituted the words "or solicitors concerned and shall restore to him or them any practising certificate or certificates held by him or them for the practice year then current.".

(c) in subsection (3) for the word "the", where secondly occurring, there shall be substituted the word "a".

19. In section 41 (appointment of judicial factor)—

(a) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(b) after the word "solicitor" where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(c) for the words "in connection with his practice as a solicitor" there shall be substituted the words ", in the case of a solicitor, in connection with his practice a ssuch";

(d) after the word "arise" there shall be inserted the following "; or

(c) that, in the case of an incorporated practice, either—

(i) its liabilities exceed its assets, or

(ii) its books, accounts and other documents are in such a condition that it is not reasonably practicable to ascertain definitely whether its liabilities exceed its assets, or

(iii) there is reasonable ground for apprehending that a claim on the guarantee fund may arise";

(e) after the word "solicitor", where fourthly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, of the incorporated practice";

(f) after the word "solicitor", where fifthly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(g) for the words "the solicitor's" there shall be subsitiuted the word "such".

20. In section 42 (distribution of sums in client bank account)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "(2)" there shall be inserted the words "or (2A)";

(ii) after the word "solicitor", where first occuring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(iii) after the word "him", where first and thirdly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it";

(iv) after the word "clients", where firstly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it on behalf of its clients";

(v) after the word "solicitor", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice";

(vi) after the word "behalf", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it on their behalf";

(vii) after the word "him", where lastly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it";

(b) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) The events to which subsection (1) applies are in relation to any incorporated practice—

(a) the making of an administration or winding up order or the appointment of a provisional liquidator, liquidator, receiver or judicial factor; or

(b) the passing of a resolution for voluntary winding-up (other than one passed solely for the purposes of reconstruction or amalgamation with another incorporated practice)";

(c) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "his", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, its";

(iii) after the word "client", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice on that behalf";

(b) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by it";

(v) after the word "name" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, by the incorporated practice in its own name".

21. In section 43 (Guarantee Fund)—

(a) in subsection (2) after the words "part of" there shall be inserted "*(a)*" and at the end there shall be inserted "; or

(b) any incorporated practice or any director, manager, secretary or other employee of an incorporated practice, notwithstanding that subsequent to the commission of that act it may have ceased to be recognised under section 34(1A) or have been wound up";

(c) in subsection (3), after paragraph *(c)*, there shall be added the following—

"*(cc)* to an incorporated practice or any director or member thereof in respect of a loss suffered by it or him by reason of dishonesty on the part of any director, manager, secretary or other employee of the incorporated practice in connection with the practice";

(d) in subsection (7)*(c)* there shall be inserted at the end the following "or in the employment of an incorporated practice".

22. In section 44 (professional indemnity)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) after the word "solicitors", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices";

(ii) in pargraph *(c)* after the word "solicitors", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices or any specified class thereof";

(b) in subsection (3)—

(i) in each of paragraphs *(b)* and *(c)* after the word "solicitors", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices or any class of incorporated practices";

(ii) in paragraph *(f)* after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice" and after each of the words "he" and "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) in paragraph *(g)* after the word "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices";

(c) in subsection (5) there shall be inserted at the end the words "and, as respects incorporated practices, means any liability incurred by it which if it had been incurred by a solicitor would constitute such civil liability";

23. In section 45 (safeguarding interests of clients of solicitors struck off or suspended)—

(a) in subsection (1) at the end there shall be inserted the words "and, in relation to any incorporated practice, the recognition under section 34(1A) of which is revoked";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) at the beginning there shall be inserted the words "In the case of a solicitor,";

(ii) after the words "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(c) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) In the case of an incorporated practice, it shall within 21 days of the material date satisfy the Council that it has made suitable arrangements for making available to its clients or to some other solicitor or solicitors or incorporated practice instructed by its clients or itself—

(a) all deeds, wills, securities, papers, books of accounts, records, vouchers and other documents in its possession or control which are held on behalf of its clients or which relate to any trust of which it is sole trustee or co-trustee only with one or more of its employees; and

(b) all sums of money due from it or held by it on behalf of its clients or subject to any trust as aforesaid.";

(d) in subsection (3)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" in both places where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(ii) after the word "he" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, any director, manager, secretary or other employee of the incorporated practice";

(e) in subsection (5), after the word "practice" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the recognition under section 34(1A) is revoked.".

24. In section 47 (restriction on employing solicitor struck off or suspended)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

((i)) after the word "solicitor", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and, unless it has such permission, an incorporated practice shall not";

(ii) after the word "his", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the word "or, as the case may be, its";

(b) in subsection (3) after the words "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, incorporated practice";

(c) in subsection (4) at the end there shall be inserted the words "and if any incorporated practice so acts its recognition under section 34(1A) shall be revoked.".

25. In section 49 (investigation by lay observer of Society's treatment of complaients), in subsection (1) after the word "solicitor", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or about an incorporated practice or an employee thereof".

26. In section 51(2) (complaints to Discipline Tribunal) after the words "client)" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice may have failed to comply with any provision of this Act or of rules made under this Act applicable to it".

27. In section 52(1) (procedure and powers of Discipline Tribunal) there shall be inserted at the end the words "or an incorporated practice".

28. In section 53 (powers of Discipline Tribunal)—

(a) in subsection (1) there shall be inserted at the end—

"; or

(c) an incorporated practice has been convicted by any court of an offence, which conviction the Tribunal is satisfied renders it unsuitable to continue to be recognised under section 34(1A); or

(d) after holding an inquiry into a complaint, the Tribunal is satisfied that an incorporated practice has failed to comply with any provision of this Act or of rules made under this Act applicable to it.".

(b) in subsection (2) (powers of Discipline Tribunal)—

(i) in paragraphs *(c)* and *(d)* after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice".

(ii) in paragraph *(e)* after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it".

(iii) after paragraph *(e)* there shall be added the following—"or

(f) order that the recognition under section 34(1A) of the incorporated practice be revoked".

(c) after subsection (6) (effective date of striking off or suspension of solicitor) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6A) Where the Tribunal order that the recognition under section 34(1A) of an incorporated practice be revoked, the Tribunal shall direct that the order shall take effect on such date as the Tribunal specifies, being a date not earlier than 60 days after its order is intimated to the incorporated practice, and such an order shall take effect accordingly.".

(d) in subsection (7) after the word "(6)" there shall be inserted the words "or (6A)" and for the words "that subsection" there shall be substituted the words "subsection (6) or, as the case may be, subsection (6A)".

29. In section 54 (appeals by solicitors from decisions of the Discipline Tribunal)—

(a) in subsection (1) for the word "him" there shall be substituted the words "that person";

(b) in subsection (2)—

(i) after the word "Where" there shall be inserted "*(a)*";

(ii) after the word "effect", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted—

";

(b) the Tribunal has ordered the revocation of the recognition under section 34(A) of an incorporated practice, the incorporated practice may within 21 days of the date when the order is intimated to it apply to the court for an order varying (subject to the limit of 60 days referred to in subsection (6A) of section 53) the direction under that subsection;"

30. In section 60 (offence for notaries public to act for unqualified persons) in subsection (2) there shall be inserted at the end the words "but "unqualified person" does not include an incorporated practice".

31. In section 61 (protection of banks)—

(a) in each of subsections (1) and (2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(b) in subsection (3) after the word "solicitor", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice" and after that word, where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, the incorporated practice".

32. In section 64 (service of notices) there shall be inserted at the end the words "or, in the case of an incorporated practice, if it is left at, or delivered or sent by post to, its registered office".

33. In section 65(1) (interpretation) after the definition of "functions" there shall be inserted the following—

"incorporated practice" has the meaning given by section 34(1A)*(c)*;"

34. In Schedule 3 (The Scottish Solicitors' Guarantee Fund)—

(a) in paragraph 1—

(i) after sub-paragraph (2) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraphs—

"(2A) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply to solicitors who are directors of incorporated practices.

(2B) Subject to the provisions of this Act, there shall be paid to the Society on behalf of the Guarantee Fund by every incorporated practice in respect of each year during which, or part of which, it is recognised under section 34(1A) a contribution (hereafter referred to as an "annual corporate contribution") in accordance with the scale of such contributions referred to in sub-paragraph (3).

(ii) in sub-paragraph (3) there shall be inserted at the end the words "and the scale of the annual corporate contributions to be so paid, which scale shall be fixed by reference to factors which shall include the number of solicitors who are directors or employees of each of the incorporated practices to which the scale relates.";

(iii) in sub-paragraph (4) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "and no annual corporate contribution by an incorporated practice";

(iv) in sub-paragraph (5) for the words "a special", where secondly occurring, there shall be substituted the words "upon every incorporated practice a contribution (hereafter referred to as a "special corporate contribution") in accordance with a scale of such contributions fixed by the Council as under sub-paragraph (3), and a special or special corporate";

(v) in paragraph 1(8) after the word "solicitors" there shall be inserted the words "or of an incorporated practice";

(b) in paragraph 3(2) after the word "solicitors", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "and incorporated practices" and after that word, where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice or practices";

(c) in paragraph 4(2) after the word "employee" there shall be inserted the words "or the incorporated practice in question or its employee";

(d) in paragraph 5(2) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice".

35. In Schedule 4 (constitution, procedure and powers of Tribunal)—

(a) in paragraph 9—

(i) after the word "solicitor", where first and secondly occurring, there shall be inserted respectively the words "or an incorporated practice" and "or the incorporated practice"; and

(ii) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or, as the case may be, it";

(iii) after the word "solicitor" where thirdly and lastly occurring there shall be inserted, in each case, the words, "or, of failure on the part of the incorporated practice to comply with any provision of this Act or of rules made under this Act";

(b) in paragraph 10 (duty of Discipline Tribunal) to give respondent solicitor notice of complaint)—

(i) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or incorporated practice";

(ii) after the words "him" and "his" there shall be inserted respectively the words "or, as the case may be, it" and "or, as the case may be, its".

(c) In paragraph 16—

(i) in each of paragraphs (*c*) and (*d*) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "or an incorporated practice";

(ii) after paragraph (*d*) there shall be added—

"or

(e) order that the recognition under section 34(1A) of an incorporated practice be revoked";

(iii) for "(*d*)" where secondly occurring, there shall be substituted "(*e*)";

(iv) after the word "court", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or under section 53(6A) which has not been varied by the court";

(v) after the word "roll", where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or as to revoking the recognition under section 34(1A) of an incorporated practice".

Building Societies Act 1962 (*c.* 37)

36. In section 34(4) (restriction on commissions for

introduction of business) after the word "solicitor" there shall be inserted the words "(including that of an incorporated practice within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980)".

Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1967 (*c.* 43)

37. In section 6(3)*(a)* (exclusion of certain solicitors from giving legal aid) the word "or" immediately preceding sub-paragraph (iii) shall be omitted and after that sub-paragraph there shall be inserted the following—

"or

(iv) in the case of a director of an incorporated practice, such conduct on the part of any person who is for the time being a director of the incorporated practice.".

Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (*c.* 10)

38. In sections 481(3) and 490(3) (savings for solicitors in relation to certain requirements to furnish information to Inland Revenue) any reference to a solicitor shall include a reference to an incorporated practice within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980 and any reference to a solicitor's client shall, in relation to a solicitor who is a director, manager, secretary or employee of such a practice, be construed as a reference to a client of that practice.

Legal Advice and Assistance Act 1972 (*c.* 50)

39. In section 5(2) (definition of "the solicitor" for purposes of rules relating to payment of certain charges or fees), after the word "solicitors", where first occurring, there shall be inserted the words "or by an incorporated practice (within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980") and after that word, where secondly occurring, there shall be inserted the words", incorporated practice".

Estate Agents Act 1979 (*c.* 38)

40. In section 1(2)*(a)* (disapplication of Act to practising solicitors and their employees) after the word "him" there shall be inserted the words "or by an incorporated practice (within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980) or a person employed by it".

Finance Act 1980 (*c.* 48)

41. In section 30(5) (saving for solicitors in relation to requirement to furnish certain information to Inland Revenue) any reference to a solicitor shall include a reference to an incorporated practice and any reference to a solicitor's client shall, in relation to a solicitor who is a director, manager, secretary or employee of an incorporated practice within the meaning of the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980, be construed as a reference to a client of that practice. — *[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Mr. Speaker: Privilege is involved in this amendment. I shall ensure that an entry is made in the Journal.

Lords amendment No. 49 agreed to.

Schedule 2

AMENDMENT OF ENACTMENTS

Lords amendment No. 50 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 51, in page 45, line 37, after "court)" insert "*(a)*".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments:

No. 52, in page 45, line 40, at end insert

"; and

(b) in paragraph (i) of the proviso after the word "Act" there shall be inserted the words "(as amended by the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland Act 1985".".

No. 54, in page 47, line 12, leave out "section 19 of"

No. 55, in page 48, line 32, at end insert—

"The Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985(*c.* 37)

28A. In section 27(1) (interpretation) in the definition of "matrimonial home" there shall be added at the end of the words "as amended by section 13(10) of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985"."

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: These are purely drafting amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 52 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 53, in page 46, line 4, after "cause" insert "proceedings".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a drafting amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 54 to 57 agreed to.

Schedule 3

REPEALS

Lords amendment: No. 58, in page 49, line 24, after "words" insert "convicted".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a drafting amendment to correct an omission in the wording of an appeal.

Mr. Ewing: It is significant that the last amendment with which we shall deal contains the word "convicted". I think that this is appropriate in relation to the Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 59 and 60 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 61 and 62 disagreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to certain of their amendments to the Bill: Mr. Dewar, Mr. Ewing, Mr. John MacKay, the Solicitor-General for Scotland and Mr. Allan Stewart; Three to be the quorum.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

To withdraw immediately.

European Communities

6.25 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 17th July, be approved.

It may be for the convenience of the House if we consider also the following motion:

That the draft European Communities (Immunities and Privileges of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 17th July, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: If the House agrees, so be it.

Mr. Rifkind: The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation—known as NASCO—was established by the convention for the conservation of salmon in the north Atlantic ocean. This convention was opened for signature at Reykjavik on 2 March 1982. NASCO's principal objective is to contribute to the conservation, restoration and rational management of salmon stocks in the north Atlantic, with the aid of the best available scientific information.

The establishment of the organisation was welcomed by the Government as a significant development in the management of salmon stocks in the high seas, thus having a beneficial effect on salmon stocks in our rivers. We have a strong interest in restricting as far as possible catches of salmon originating from our rivers, but caught in the waters of the Faroe islands and Greenland where they feed —the intercepting fisheries. We hope, therefore, that the convention, through NASCO, will enable these fisheries to be carefully managed and preserved.

The location of the headquarters in Edinburgh has also been welcomed by the Government—not only for the benefit to the local economy from holding meetings there, but as a recognition of the importance to the United Kingdom as a whole of salmon fishing as a commercial and recreational resource, particularly in remote areas like the Scottish Highlands where it is so important to the tourist industry. We believe, therefore, that it is highly appropriate that the headquarters is located in Scotland. It is, in fact, the first recognised international organisation to be based in Scotland.

The convention entered into force on 1 October 1983. The European Economic Community is a party to the convention and a member of the organisation, together with Canada, Denmark—in respect of Greenland and the Faroe Islands—Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States. The headquarters agreement with the organisation, which implements article 3 of the convention, was signed on 26 April at its new offices in Rutland square, Edinburgh. It will enter into force when the necessary legislation is in place—in other words, once the two draft orders now under consideration have been made.

As the EC is a party to the convention, it is a Community treaty for the purposes of the European Communities Act 1972. It is proposed that the first draft order before the House—that relating to definition of treaties—should be made under section 1(3) of the 1972 Act specifying the headquarters agreement as a Community treaty. This order provides the basis for the second order — that relating to the immunities and privileges of NASCO provided by the headquarters agreement, which will be made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act. The headquarters agreement implements article 3 of the convention by specifying the privileges and immunities that NASCO is to enjoy in the United Kingdom. This agreement is similar to other headquarters agreements entered into by the United Kingdom with international organisations having their headquarters here—for example, the International Tin Council, the International Lead and Zinc Study Group and the Commonwealth Foundation.

Certain principal privileges and immunities will be conferred. NASCO will be provided with legal capacity, inviolability of archives, exemptions from taxes on income and capital gains, the same rating relief as is accorded to a diplomatic mission, relief from car tax and VAT and exemption from import duties.

The representatives of parties will be provided with immunity from suit and legal process in respect of their official acts and inviolability for official papers and documents.

Staff members of NASCO will be provided with immunity from suit and legal process in respect of their official acts, exemption from income tax, "first arrival" customs privileges and exemption from social security legislation.

Those privileges and immunities are conferred on a strict basis of functional necessity. The House will note that nobody is given the full immunity from jurisdiction of a diplomatic agent.

The House will wish to know that NASCO currently employs only two staff members and both are permanently resident in the United Kingdom.

I believe that NASCO will help protect a valuable and vulnerable resource. Even those among us who are not given to the solitary joys of river fishing will recognise that the disappearance of the salmon from our rivers would represent an irreparable loss; not only in terms of wildlife conservation, important though that is, but for the incalculable effect it would have on commercial salmon fisheries and on tourism in the remotest parts of the land where the local people rely even more heavily on incomes earned during the tourist season. If one takes away the fish, one takes away the fishermen and the incomes they generate.

I hope therefore that Members on both sides of the House will want to signal their welcome of NASCO to its Edinburgh home by supporting the draft orders before the House, and will join us in making a positive contribution to the preservation of a vulnerable resource.

6.30 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful to the Minister of State for explaining the orders. Some of the comments that he made are right. The salmon species in Scotland is in almost as grave a situation as the Conservative party in Scotland. It is right that we should be doing something about endangered fish, but I am not so certain about the Conservative party.

The Minister said that there are only two members of staff working for NASCO, so that will not impose any particular burdens or difficulties on Edinburgh. Like the Minister of State, I represent a constituency in Lothian region and I welcome the fact that this interesting and useful international organisation has located its headquarters in Edinburgh. However, I suspect that the Minister of

State will agree with me when I say that it is already difficult to find a parking place in Edinburgh without having to compete with people from Canada, Finland or the Faroes who might be able to claim immunity from parking regulations. Perhaps the Minister will say something about that.

I hope that we will be permitted to speak about the background to the work of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation. There is no doubt that stocks of migratory salmon in British rivers are critically low and declining at an alarming rate. Indeed, it is a pity that we are not talking about immunity for the salmon rather than immunity for the bureaucrats. It is worth while to encourage scientific study and international co-operation in order to protect that and other species, and that is NASCO's function. There is a risk of too much talk and too little action.

I live near the river Tweed and, although I have never attempted to catch a salmon, I am well placed to witness some of the action that takes place on the river, in the estuary and offshore. Perfectly legitimate net fisheries and sporting anglers are losing out year after year to large-scale illegal fishing. That is compounded on the river Tweed, if I might say so in the presence of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), by the extraordinary phenomenon of legal drift net fishery for salmon off Northumberland.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the hon. Gentleman declare any interest he might have in that area?

Mr. Home Robertson: I have never caught a fish in my life and I do not particularly want to.

Article 8 of the convention says that one of the functions of the North-East Atlantic Commission with regard to its area shall be

"to propose regulatory measures for fishing in the area of fisheries jurisdiction of a member of salmon originating in the rivers of other Parties".

Salmon that originate in Scotland are being intercepted by what are at present legal fisheries off the north-east coast of England. That is causing problens, and I expect some hon. Members may wish to say something about it.

The Government are constantly saying that they will do something about those problems. A scheme was mooted some years ago for tagging salmon to ensure that only legitimately caught fish could be marketed in this country. We also have the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation, but while the Government fiddle, salmon stocks are being exterminated. I believe that the fundamental problem is that the current freshwater fisheries legislation is transparently unfair. It is designed to protect the vested interests of riparian owners and to exclude virtually everyone else. I recognise that it is not appropriate in the debate to raise the need for a complete overhaul of freshwater fisheries legislation, but that is what we ought to be doing sooner or later, preferably sooner.

We need a framework of freshwater and coastal fisheries management that will command respect from all concerned. It is absurd that so many rivers and estuaries are still under the authority of bodies that are effectively controlled by landowners.

The river that I know the best is the river Tweed and on the council of the commission that controls the fisheries on that river are two dukes, two earls, one viscount, one marquis, one baronet and four retired officers. It is a bit much to expect the ordinary punters of that neighbourhood to have a lot of time for an organisation that is composed of such members.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Since the hon. Gentleman claims to speak for the ordinary punter of the Tweed area, would it be fair to tell the House whether he has ever been a Tweed commissioner or whether he owns any land in the area?

Mr. Home Robertson: I own land in that area. On one occasion I was a representative commissioner for Berwickshire district council. I was elected to that post, so there is a distinction.

We wish the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation well. We warn the Government that they must heed the growing scientific evidence about the depletion of salmon stocks. We do not need much in the way of bureaucratic immunity, but we need genuine effective action to protect the salmon species.

6.37 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome the orders and the fact that NASCO is to be resident in Edinburgh. Like the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), I hope that we shall see action. The action will have to come from a combination of that organisation and the Government. It is depressing that we have made no more progress to assist the survival of the wild salmon over recent years. The words "wild salmon" have crept into our vocabulary since the introduction of farmed salmon, which have been a spectacular success, particularly on the west coast of Scotland.

Tonight we are interested in conservation, the survival at sea of the migratory salmon and its survival in United Kingdom rivers. If Britain does not set an example, we cannot expect others to take the vital steps that are required internationally. The economy of Scotland and of the areas of England and Wales that have salmon rivers is most concerned about the progress made by that organisation. The rural economy surrounding those rivers is affected , whether it is a question of hotels, shops, travel and tourism or the local authority rates, because the valuation in salmon fishing areas is extremely high, particularly in Scotland. Therefore, the success of salmon fishing is of crucial importance. Employment, the ghillies, other aspects of river management, the construction of boats, angling equipment and clothes are all most important.

The consumption of salmon is being maintained only because of the great success of farmed fish. I believe that we can now compete with Norway and other parts of the world. If we did not have farmed salmon, salmon from the wild would be extremely scarce because of the overkill of our resources, not by rod but certainly by net. Like the hon. Member for East Lothian, I would not claim to be an active fisherman, but we must look seriously in the world of conservation at drift nets and other methods of fishing in the sea, bearing in mind the migratory nature of the life of a salmon.

Drift nets, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State mentioned, are banned in Scotland, but not in England and Wales. There is exceptional confusion in the Solway area, close to the national boundary between England and Scotland. The area of navigable water is relatively small and there are continual arguments as to the side of the border on which the boats are operating.

[Sir Hector Monro]

A crucial decision must be made with regard to the Northumberland coast. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) will probably speak about that later. I know that it is an old, traditional fishery. Everything would be fine if the people in the area were using the old, traditional methods of catching, with relatively few boats and old-style nets. However, today there is a modern fleet. I was told in July, in answer to a parliamentary question, that there were 121 licences issued by the Northumberland water authority. In the 1950s the average catch was a little over 2,000 fish a year. Last year, 77,200 fish were caught. Therefore, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of salmon caught off the Northumberland coast. It is having a dramatic impact on the number of salmon returning to the Scottish rivers. If they do not return, eventually we shall have no stock.

I am a member of the Nature Conservancy Council. If the council had responsibility for salmon, I am sure that we would be considering it as an endangered species. We consider the life cycle of birds and other mammals and we know how serious the position will be if we do not conserve what we have.

I am glad that the new organisation has been set up in Edinburgh, but most of us are aware that all true wildlife lives a precarious existence. There are limits to what we can take from the wild unless sufficient steps are taken to ensure conservation.

It is obvious that drift netting is the main danger. We have to deal with the problem in relation also to the Greenland fisheries and particularly the Faroes. In addition, we must have consultation with our friends in Ireland about their activities off the Donegal coast.

As I said earlier, we must put our own house in order. We have to look closely at stake netting and also at the fixed engines. They are important and operate legitimately around our coast but we must, as conservationists, ensure that there is no overkill.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the question of conserving a precarious species, is it not the fact that the danger presented by the English drift net fishermen pales into insignificance when compared with the activities of the Faroese and the Greenland fishermen?

Sir Hector Monro: I know that the hon. Gentleman has great expertise in fishing and I will accept that what he says as true, particularly with regard to developments in the Faroes in the past 10 years. It has been very significant and it must be looked at in international negotiation.

I welcome the inshore fishing regulations that were introduced by the Government in the summer. While not affecting salmon, they prevent mobile gear from sweeping into the bays and estuaries of Scotland and damaging our salmon fishing.

I am glad that the Government have looked seriously at the problems of salmon poaching, salmon sales and tagging. We must try to resolve those problems as soon as possible. Fishery protection has been stepped up by the introduction of fishery protection vessels, and by the purchase of an aircraft in the past year. It has been very effective in dealing with salmon fishing. I pay tribute to our district boards for their part in salmon conservation and for the employment they provide for the water bailiffs.

I reiterate that, if we are to take salmon conservation seriously, we must look at the problem of drift netting and be prepared to take action. We must also be prepared to negotiate with the Faroese and the Greenland Government about their activities in the Atlantic. I hope that the Minister will comment on that matter in his reply.

6.45 pm

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): Although I welcome the establishment on the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation in Edinburgh, I hope that the Government will see fit, after it has been established, to take some positive steps, as a matter of urgency, to reverse the decline in our salmon stocks.

The two orders before the House are particularly concerned with salmon conservation. Although a number of countries that fish for salmon on the high seas have agreed to quotas, and in some instances have agreed reductions, so far the United Kingdom has not responded in any positive way and is still allowing indiscriminate, wholesale netting, legally and illegally, of the shoals of salmon returning to the United Kingdom rivers.

There is no doubt that if the United Kingdom does not act soon, our NASCO partners will call for action, or else there may be retaliation by the salmon quota countries, which could abolish their quotas, slaughter stocks and ignore conservation, as a retaliation to our unseemly and selfish attitude to salmon conservation.

As a result, the Atlantic salmon will go unprotected, its life span as a species will be seriously jeopardised, and Scotland, as well as to a lesser extent England and Wales, will suffer a disastrous decline in salmon searching for their spawning rivers. The economic and financial consequences of such action to sea fishermen in Scotland, to rod anglers and to tourism will be very serious. It could be long-lasting, and perhaps the salmon industry and the related industries would never recover.

On salmon conservation, at least three major steps should be taken. Drift netting off the north-east coast should cease. Nylon monofilament gill nets should be banned and a more serious attitude adopted by the Government, fishery boards, water authorities, magistrates and courts to the salmon poachers.

All the major organisations, the Atlantic Salmon Trust, trout and salmon and other conservation associations, have called unanimously for the end of drift netting. It was accomplished along the Scottish coast many years ago, but there is no such restriction along the Yorkshire and Northumberland coastline. It would mean restricting and possibly ending the licensing of fishing vessels using the drift netting technique, and thereby allowing the returning salmon to find their own spawning grounds.

According to the Atlantic Salmon Trust, the catches declared by the Northumbria and Yorkshire authorities are in the region of 60,000 salmon annually. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food estimated that 95 per cent. of them are intercepted in their passage to the estuaries of eastern Scotland.

Mr. Beith: Did not the same Ministry report that the effect that that fishing is supposed to have on the Scottish rivers is not more than 7·5 per cent.? Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that he is talking about the

livelihood of a great many fishermen and their families, whose fathers and grandfathers before them were also fishermen?

Mr. Mason: The hon. Gentleman has his point of view, and those Conservative Members in the north-east who want to register that point of view today are obviously entitled to do so, but if we are to take salmon conservation seriously, the problem of drift netting has to be tackled.

In *The Times* not long ago the chairman of the River Tweed Commissioners said:

"It is quite scandalous that the Government continues to turn a blind eye to this slaughter of returning Scottish salmon at a time when there is mounting concern over diminishing stocks."

The chairman went on to say:

"It is galling that English nets can intercept salmon only a few miles from our rivermouth, using these deadly drift netting techniques which were outlawed in Scotland years ago, and still contribute absolutely nothing to the management costs of the parent river".

According to statistics prepared by the British Field Sports Society, the north-east drift net fishery has considerably increased its catches in recent years. Between 1950 and 1959 about 2,000 fish were taken per year. Between 1970 and 1979 nearly 5,000 fish were caught per year. But in 1984 alone 7,700 fish were taken. Yet in Scotland the annual sea catch returns show that between 1970 and 1979 about 400,000 fish were taken, while in 1984 this had dropped to 280,000. So there is no doubt that this interceptory drift netting is having a calamitous effect on salmon stocks, on conservation and on legal salmon fishing off Scotland.

America and Canada have already placed restrictions on their catches. Greenland's salmon quota has been further reduced. Unless they see, as a result of NASCO being formed, the United Kingdom being subjected to a more common objective by the salmon states to conserve, they may have to apply pressure on the United Kingdom to take salmon conservation more seriously.

The Government must take steps to ban the use of this cruel and deadly nylon monofilament gill net. When I questioned the Minister of Agriculture in December 1983 about a ban, he stated that our fishery scientists were conducting research into the effects of using monofilament nets. I do not know with what results, but it has not led to a ban.

Some research has been done elsewhere. In British Columbia a report on a test which resulted in these nets being banned said:

"It has been established that mono-filament nets will, under certain conditions, out-fish all other regular gill nets to a degree where serious management of resources would follow . . . widespread adoption of the gear".

Some idea of the deadly efficiency of these nets was shown in an experiment in the river inlet fishery. In one week, when the average catch of all ordinary gill net boats was 410, two fishermen using complete monofilament nets took 1,100 and 1,546 fish respectively. Hence the imposition of the ban. Not only is it a deadly piece of equipment, it is cruel too, causing considerable damage to escaping fish which drown as a result of gill injuries, or become diseased and then pollute the rivers. Broken nylon monofilament gill nets become ghost nets hanging in the seas and river estuaries, killing fish slowly as they hang from their gills. Because these nets do not rot like hemp ones, they go on killing and injuring fish, seals and sea birds. Gannets and sea-diving birds have no chance of seeing them because of their invisibility under water.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the World Wildlife Organisation are adamant, as are the Salmon and Trout Association and the Atlantic Salmon Trust, that these nets should be banned. Their use is a form of cruel mass slaughter at sea of one of our finest fish species, the survival of which is undoubtedly being threatened.

What are the Government doing to curb the mass growth of salmon poaching to help conserve the salmon? It is now no longer the odd man in the village taking one to sell for a couple of pints; it is highly organised, with gangs poaching on a large scale, intimidating bailiffs, wrecking their boats, and having a range of outlets for their ill-gotten gains. Using gas, cyanide and nets, they are emptying our estuaries and rivers of countless salmon.

Every salmon river in the United Kingdom reports an increase in the discovery of broken illegal nets year after year. This includes the Scottish coastline too. A special article in *The Scotsman* said:

"It is no big secret that motor boats from Peterhead and Fraserburgh are to be seen returning at night with their lights off and weighed down with dead salmon, destined to end up remarkably quickly on slabs at Billingsgate. They too, use monofilament gill nets but, unlike England, there is no right here to drift net for salmon off the coast. Peterhead Police say, 'It seems to be increasing and it seems to be a situation which is getting out of hand.'"

Questioning Lord Belstead in another place in July 1983, Lord Chelwood said:

"Is my noble friend further aware that, as proof of how serious the decline in Atlantic salmon seems to be, figures seem to show that licensed netsmen in Scotland in the last decade have seen the tonnage caught decline by nearly 50 per cent.? Is this not a really serious matter? . . . Are we not prepared to face up to it?"

Lord Belstead replied:

"My Lords, I entirely agree with my noble friend Lord Chelwood that there is undoubtedly evidence of illegal catching of salmon and that it is on a substantial scale. I can assure my noble friend that the Government are well aware of the need for prompt action."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 July 1983; Vol. 443, c. 1368.]

Prompt action? What action? The Government started a consultative review, a review of fisheries in England and Wales, in July 1981. Thereafter, a salmon sales group was established and that reported in July 1983. Its report was entitled, "Salmon Conservation—A New Approach." It recommended a salmon-tagging scheme to curb poaching. The report stated:

"Illegal fishing for salmon and trout has reached epidemic proportions in England and Wales. Impossible to quantify as to extent or effect, reliable, experienced opinion nevertheless holds that in some areas illegal catches regularly exceed the legal and threaten to destroy the resource."

Over four years ago, the review began. Over two years ago a salmon-tagging scheme was recommended by a team of specialists. As yet we have made no progress. Rod and line anglers and fly fishers are incensed. Tourist returns on fishing in Scotland are on the decline. Fly fishers, of course, have long distances to travel and expensive journeys, and it is still costly on most rivers, but there are fewer and fewer catches and so fewer return to Scotland to catch a salmon with rod and line.

All who are interested in salmon conservation should ponder what is being lost because there is a case to be made for the promotion of rod fishing at the expense of restricting netting, but especially for recognising that the legal sea netters are not getting the returns that they would like and the illegal ones are not spreading their returns in Scotland or creating much allied industry with their

[Mr. Mason]

operations. Rod fishermen are also incensed that netsmen contribute so little to conservation and restocking when they take so large a portion of the catch.

A recent survey put the value of the salmon catch on Scottish rivers at £2·6 million a year. Then there are the wages of bailiffs and ghillies, the employment generated in legal netting, in hotels, tackle manufacturers and shops, boat building and hirers, smoking businesses, food processing and fishing holiday sales—all worth scores of millions of pounds to Scotland. That is money often going into otherwise impoverished rural communities in the form of jobs. All is at risk unless something is done to cut back this alarming growth of salmon poaching. Those in Scotland who oppose the salmon-tagging scheme are cutting off their noses to spite their faces.

Another factor that may well bedevil the sea salmon netters is the growth of salmon fish farming. As these fish farms increase in numbers and inland farmed salmon multiply with increased annual production, prices for salmon will tumble. Sea netting may not be worth while. The salmon will then get back up the river and the rod and line angler will benefit. So will all those multifarious activities connected with rod and line salmon fishing. Scotland's tourist industry could benefit enormously and the fly fisher will come back into his own.

I end as I began. When we are fully participating in the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation we shall have to say clearly to all its members that we take salmon conservation seriously and that we shall at least curtail the use of the drift net, abolish the use of the nylon monofilament net and introduce measures to curb the activities of those criminals who are poaching the seas and rivers of salmon.

6.59 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I do not wish to keep the House long because the admirable speech of the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) has covered much of the ground that I should have covered. He mentioned one point on which I must correct him. He is being exceptionally optimistic if he supposes that the spread of fish farming and the increase in the numbers of farmed salmon will have the effect that he imagines. There is no evidence to suggest that there is the connection that he sought to draw. Many of us hoped that there might be, but I am afraid that experience has shown that it is an illusion. There will still be the poacher looking for stolen fish, however many farmed fish may reach the market. The House can unfortunately draw no comfort from the point put forward by the right hon. Gentleman.

I should declare an interest. I am chairman of the British Field Sports Society's fishery committee, and a colleague of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir C. Johnson Smith) on the Salmon and Trout Association Council, and I am involved with the Anglers' Co-operative Association, as is more than one Opposition Member. I am a salmon fisherman. I own a small stretch of river in Wales. During the past five years I have caught the grand total of two fish in it, but not for want of trying. I have also been lucky enough to catch a few fish on other stretches of water.

I am especially glad to see not just my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but sitting beside him my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who has been known to hold a rod in his hand from time to time. It is also especially gratifying for the House to have the company, albeit practically silent, of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who is Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who has a great deal to do with this issue. His predecessor, who has now gone to a harder job, was closely involved with some of the discussions about salmon conservation which have been taking place over the past couple of years.

If the gentlemen from the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation come to Edinburgh and if the other members of that organisation are to visit Edinburgh, apart from the pleasures of so doing, they may well ask themselves what type of salmon conservation policy their host country has. It may not be easy for them to find the answer if we rely on what we have now, because there is no doubt that the salmon that breed in British waters face the most appalling array of threats to their survival, not all of which have been listed in the debate. We have heard some mention, not unnaturally, of the north-east drift net fishery. The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central quoted some figures, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

It is significant that the average declared catch from the north-east drift net fishery — anyone who knows anything about that fishery knows there is also a great deal of undeclared catch—between 1970 and 1979 equalled one ninth of the total catch in all Scottish waters, whereas in 1984 the overall declared catch was one quarter of the total catch in all Scottish waters, including all rivers and estuaries.

Complacent as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) may be about those figures, and anxious though he may be to defend his constituency interest, he cannot brush aside, in the way he sought, the inexorable trend that they show towards the extinction of salmon in some east coast Scottish rivers.

Mr. Beith: Why does the hon. Gentleman assume that there is a substantial undeclared catch from the sea fishery but no undeclared catch from the river fishery?

Mr. Onslow: Because it is much easier for someone fishing the north-east drift net fishery to transfer his catch at night to a Dutch or German trawler to be taken to the continent and sold there. If the hon. Gentleman is not aware that that type of thing happens, he should perhaps make some further inquiries in his area. It is much harder to quantify the poached catch from Scottish rivers, but all the evidence shows that there is much less fish there to start with. The hon. Gentleman could usefully do a little more research on that matter.

The threat to the salmon is not confined to Scottish east coast rivers. There is a similar threat on the north-west coast of Scotland. I have a letter written by someone from Sutherland referring to the illegal inshore and offshore netting that goes on there. He says:

"We believe this to be particularly bad on the North West coast. Once the legal nets come off, then practically every crofter or small boat owner is out somewhere with a nylon net."

If we go round the coast, we come to the estuaries of the rivers Dee and Clwyd. There is an interesting report, dating from 1982, which describes how the poachers work the Dee estuary. It describes how the

"so-called sea fishermen do catch and take considerable numbers of salmon during the course of a season in addition to their normal catches of sea fish. They simply adjust their activities to the fish that are most abundant at the time and this includes salmon and just by watching the successes or otherwise of the legitimate salmon trammel netsmen can quickly assess the run of fish taking place. They can, if they wish, move into the productive zone of the low water channel pushing out the licensed men and then block the channel completely. There is no fear of retaliation from the licensed salmon netsmen as they are considerably outnumbered and the bailiffs can do little as the practice is perfectly lawful until attempts are made to bring any catch ashore."

I have a letter dated August 1985 from a Dee water bailiff in which he talks about illegal fishing. He says:

"this is the real problem, which has escalated dramatically over the five years to such an extent now that I am physically and mentally exhausted. I don't know which way to turn and am seriously thinking of quitting after fourteen years service, because I cannot take any more aggravation, abuse and seeing fish killed and not have any authority to do anything about it. There must be a change in byelaws, and it must come soon. This river to me is dying. This is the worst I have seen on it for migratory fish, and it's been sliding for the last three years. This is the problem . . . and it is causing a breakdown of morals and laws within the river system, that if some form of check is not brought in then it will be out of hand, because its just like having a supermarket and leaving all the doors open."

If we go further round the coast, we reach the Torridge, which is a river in Devon that I have fished for over 20 years. I have a report from one of the local angling organisations, which states:

"In 1982 1,000 Salmon and 3,000 Sea Trout were taken illegally in the estuary of the Taw and Torridge. There was a declared catch of 22 netsmen of 1,394 Salmon and 3,576 Sea Trout. 1982 Rod catch of the Torridge was 46 Salmon, and 60 Sea Trout."

On that estuary, unless there is enough rain to bring the river down in flood and so make it possible for the fish to run, they wash up beyond Bideford and down again. The netsmen who are working the banks of the Torridge simply scoop up the fish without any restraint or control. It is hardly surprising that most people who know anything about that river regarded it at the beginning of this year as having virtually ceased to be a salmon river.

We could go on round the coast, but perhaps I can rest with the threats that the salmon face in the estuary. The threat does not come just from the poachers. The Torridge estuary has a bad record of pollution caused by inadequate sewage works. There are other estuaries with similar problems where a great slug of poisoned water washes up and down with the tide and makes it impossible for the salmon to get through to the rivers and live.

But when salmon get through to the rivers, what do they find? They find the poachers there as well. We have heard tonight of the threat on the river Wye. There has been something like open warfare on the lower Wye where wires have been stretched across the river to catch the bailiffs' boats. Stones have been dropped from bridges. Bailiffs are rightly afraid to go around singly, unless they have a large dog. The Bridport gang, the Monmouth boys and all the other gangs of poachers mentioned by the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central know that part of the river well. They know where the fish are and will steal them given half the chance. The task of the water bailiffs on the Wye can be very daunting.

On the river Esk in Yorkshire, which is nearer to the right hon. Gentleman's part of the country, the poachers have won the battle. They will stone a legitimate angler to get him off the water so that they can poach.

The situation is not quite the same on the river Dovey in Wales, but poachers have come from Birmingham and Manchester, poisoned the river and scooped up all the fish. Fortunately, in one case they were caught and received severe sentences. We must not ignore that aspect of the fight.

Pollution is an important factor. It would be a mistake to ignore the fact that water extraction—pumping water out of the river for irrigation, as farmers increasingly do these days — works against the chances of salmon survival because it lowers river levels to a point where they cannot survive.

Water quality is also affected by run-off from the spreading of fertilisers on riverside fields. That also makes it impossible for salmon parr, salmon smolts and mature salmon to survive in the river.

Land drainage, which is still heavily subsidised, has the effect of turning rivers into drains and lowering their levels through the years of drought such as we experienced last year and the year before.

Forestry is another source of drainage. It is a great promoter of acidification because of its effects on run-off. Indeed, it is probably a more serious contributor to acidification of our rivers than the so-called acid rain.

Finally, there are the pests — the mink, the goosanders and the seals. Seals arouse conflicting emotions in people who do not have the interests of salmon at heart. The Government seem at present to be relying on a document produced by the sea mammals research unit. That paper is based largely on research undertaken, curiously enough, at the kind of place where one would not have found many salmon for the seals to feed on at that time of the year. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley has taken a close interest in the problem, and I hope that he will have the opportunity to say and do something about it on another occasion.

Against that background, it may be thought odd that I should also cavil at the absence of a quota on our own catches of salmon. Certainly it is not worthy that there is no quota imposed by our Government on the United Kingdom salmon catch. We are the largest producer of salmon in the European Community. The Greenlanders and the Faroese wonder why they should suffer under salmon quotas when we, as the largest producer country, cannot get round to imposing a quota on our own catch. The pressure for the acceptance of a quota will mount, and so it should, but the species must first survive for a quota to become a really effective defence.

I agree that we must have action by the Government, but I disagree with the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central that it is reasonable to suppose that a salmon-tagging scheme would prove as effective a defence here as it may have proved in Canada. In fact, I believe that the Canadians are having second thoughts about it. The French, however, are considering the possibility of introducing such a scheme, and it certainly has theoretical attractions. The difficulty is how to implement it in practice without creating a back door to the black market, which is the very thing that we are trying to prevent. How would the tags be controlled? How can poachers be prevented from obtaining tags? How will imports be controlled? How will fish from fish farms be dealt with? It would be very difficult for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to propose legislation to implement such measures in so convincing a way that the House would pass it without challenge. I am sorry to have to say

[Mr. Onslow]

that, because I know that for the past two years the Department has honestly and genuinely been trying to see whether it could make a salmon-tagging scheme look convincing, and I and others have done all that we can to help.

There is, however, an alternative which I believe would have an equally good effect but be much less cumbersome to administer. It is to reverse the onus of proof and to provide that anyone having a salmon in his possession must show legal title to it—a licence or permit to catch salmon, or a receipt to prove his title, whether the salmon be in a hotel deep freeze or in a council house freezer. Anyone who can show legal possession will have no cause to fear. Only people who cannot establish that legal entitlement will face further inquiries and possible prosecution.

It has been a cherished principle of our law that the onus of proof should not be reversed without good cause, but in recent years there have been two examples of such a reversal. The first is in the Deer Acts. Secondly, under the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act anyone sending dogs underground is required to show that he is not digging for badgers. Personally, I do not take exception to that. I believe that the onus of proof could be transferred in the same way in this case. I hope that such provision will be foreshadowed in the Queen's Speech so that the poacher can be cut off from the market for stolen fish. I believe that that should be a priority.

Something must also be done about the north-east drift net fishery—a problem which is confined to part of the United Kingdom salmon conservation issue. I do not agree that it should be stamped out entirely and at once, as some hon. Members wish, but I believe that it is reasonable to provide that the number of endorsees should be severely restricted and that the right to operate a net should apply only when the licensee is in the boat operating the net. That would have a powerful effect. I should also like use of the monofilament net in daylight to be completely outlawed. That, too, would have a powerful and interesting self-policing effect on the use of a device which it may prove harder to stamp out in English than in Scottish waters.

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Insistence that the owner of the licence should be in the boat with the drift net might put a considerable number of people out of work if the owner were temporarily unable to go out with the boat due to illness or some other cause. That problem would have to be faced.

Mr. Onslow: I accept that it could put a number of people out of that line of employment. Whether it would put them out of work altogether is another matter. If that type of fishery is restricted, it is inevitable that some people will be denied that occupation. In that context, my hon. Friend might reflect on the number of ghillies and others on Scottish rivers who are currently being put out of work by the north-east drift net fishery.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): A number of ghillies in my constituency have been given notice this year that their jobs are to disappear.

Mr. Onslow: If the income of an estate is diminished because it can no longer attract fishermen from England, Scotland, Wales, France, or wherever, to pay the traditional fishing rent because there are no fish to be caught, the ghillies' jobs will inevitably be at risk. No one is more aware of that than the unfortunate ghillies. I believe the river Tay never ran down to summer level at all this year, although that was purely due to the weather. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) should bear in mind that his drift net fishermen can fish the sea throughout their limited season, but that the possibility of catching fish in rivers depends on the rivers being in order. I believe most salmon anglers in this country are quite prepared to face the consequence of a shift in employment from south of the border to the north. It is not difficult to imagine that for every job that might be lost because the licensee had to be on a boat which would be drift-netting off Northumberland, four or five jobs would be created in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and elsewhere in Scotland.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Does my hon. Friend agree that we must bear in mind the importance of the employment of extra ghillies and the consequent opportunities for the whole of the Scottish industry?

Mr. Onslow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North is well placed, as he represents an area where all this happens. It is no good promoting Scottish rivers for salmon fishing if the salmon have already been swept up in the North sea's drift net fisheries. This is an important subject because of the employment opportunities that the salmon fishing industry can provide in areas where they are sorely needed, and for the conservation and protection of a scarce species from which many of us have drawn great pleasure, and which many of us enjoy watching as well as fishing for. Not every salmon angler wants to kill every fish he sees or catches —he wants to see fish; he wants to know they are there. What he does when he catches them is up to him. A chance must be a fine thing, and we badly need a chance for the salmon to survive.

7.22 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I also welcome the agreement and creation of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation. As a Scot, I welcome the fact that its headquarters will be in Edinburgh. Several hon. Members have emphasised the importance of conservation measures, especially with a view to getting more fish going up our rivers. Several hon. Members, in particular the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), have mentioned the importance of salmon fishing to the local economies of many parts of Scotland, its importance to the tourist industry and the jobs that might be created directly and indirectly. The North sea drift net fishermen seem to be the Aunt Sally of the evening, and, as this debate can run for another four hours and eight minutes, if my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will have something to say on this important matter.

We are all sensitive about jobs in our own communities, but I hope that none of us is so bold or brash as to say, "Jobs in my community at the expense of jobs in someone else's community".

We are talking about fishing which has gone on since time immemorial. There was a vast increase in drift net salmon fishing in the 1960s and a form of licensing was introduced. It may be that further conservation measures will be needed, and licensing is often a means of reconciling conflicting interests. However, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) last week in a Standing Committee lectured me on inshore Scottish fishing and the need for scientific evidence before conservation measures are taken. The Government will not proceed with such measures unless they have scientific evidence.

Perhaps the Minister will state what scientific evidence the Government have on this matter, or whether they are commissioning any such evidence. One cannot help but see the obvious connection between drift netting in the north-east of England and its immediate impact on the river Tweed. However, there is surely not enough evidence to justify the statement that the loss of one job drift netting off the north-east coast of England could create four jobs for ghillies, jobs on the river Tay. I suspect that the impact declines the further north one goes.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman must be aware of the evidence that shows that 90 per cent. of the fish caught off the north-east coast of England were destined for Scottish waters, including the Tay.

Mr. Wallace: I accept that 90 per cent. were destined for Scottish waters — most for the Tweed. The report also states that, if one takes account of non-catch fishing mortality, the total effect of English fishing in Scotland would be 7·5 per cent. This underlines the point that there is a need for sound evidence to avoid such generalised statements. The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) mentioned the Solway firth. It is very difficult to see how it is affected by something on a completely different coast. More is involved than one drift net fishery and several of the other factors, such as poaching, have been mentioned.

I am impressed with the organisation's first report. It intends to establish a scientific data base so that conservation measures might be more effective. Perhaps the Minister will tell us about the Government's funding of it.

During the recess, I had an opportunity to visit a research laboratory in the constituency of the Minister, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute. We discussed a whole host of problems, although admittedly not the salmon fishery, and it was clear that, like many other research laboratories which are funded substantially publicly, it is having to consider carefully what projects it can undertake because of funding costs. It is important to know what support the Government are giving this organisation.

A ban on monofilament gill nets has been asked for. The Minister might confirm that the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1985 outlawed such fishing in Scotland. We had debates similar to this on the Report stage of that Bill. How many prosecutions have there been since that Bill was enacted?

Salmon tagging has been considered at length in the Department. If it is proposed to take tagging a step further, I hope that the administrative and bureaucratic problems that it could pose for those involved in fish farming will be considered. A considerable volume of fish now go through fish farms in the north of Scotland and in my constituency. People involved are worried about those potential burdens, which could add significantly to their costs.

We should consider other means of tackling poaching. I take what the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said about the balance of proof, but I wonder what measures might be involved. There would be howls of protest if it were suggested that the police should be empowered to search domestic deep freezes. All manner of safeguards would have to be considered.

Mr. Onslow: It would not be necessary for the police to make searches. Members of the public health department might come across salmon in a hotel's deep freeze and reasonably ask where they came from. If any type of enforcement is to be effective, it must be seen through to its logical conclusion.

Mr. Wallace: I am not certain whether that is possible. I cannot imagine public health authorities having similar access to the council house deep freeze which the hon. Gentleman also mentioned. It is important that we tackle poaching, but we must be careful about civil liberties implications before changing the burden of proof.

I welcome the orders.

7.30 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): This is a serious debate, and the more one hears the views of hon. Members the more one realises that perhaps we should have had a whole day's debate on this subject a long time ago. Perhaps we shall have.

I was particularly interested in the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). I did not agree with all he said, but he put his finger on the chief problem—illegal fishing, wherever it may be found. His idea of possibly moving towards a quota system may be something for future consideration, but there is no point in having a quota system unless one solves the problem of illegal fishing. The result would be simply to drive everyone into illegal fishing, and that would make the matter worse rather than better.

We all welcome the setting up in Scotland of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation. As every speaker in this debate has said, it raises the whole question of salmon conservation. I am speaking on this subject because of the deep anxiety of many of my constituents. The river Esk is the only salmon river in Yorkshire and in recent years it has become almost denuded of salmon, particularly in its upper reaches. That has had serious consequences not only for those licensed fishermen who have paid their dues and expect proper sport, but also for the future of salmon stocks and the future management of the river.

The activities of poachers have become so widespread that serious damage and inconvenience are being caused in the harbour and to the boats of the fishing fleet itself. In one instance the lifeboat was fouled by poaching equipment left lying in the water, an incident which in other circumstances could have been extremely serious for those for whom the lifeboat might have been launched. Much blame is being put upon my drift net fishermen. It is claimed that the chief cause of the decline in the number of salmon is the result, mainly, of excessive drift netting off the coast of north-east England. Let me examine this case first.

[Sir Michael Shaw]

It is claimed that there is no control over drift net fishing. Licensed drift netters are, in fact, closely regulated. My drift netters will shortly have to pay £425 for a licence, a vast increase over the cost a few years ago. Nets are restricted in length. In the case of Yorkshire it is 400 yd. The number of drift net licences issued by the Yorkshire water authority is limited to 29. The regulations are there all right, but the trouble is that fishermen are taking up drift netting without a licence.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the length of the nets—I think he said 400 yd. What is the depth of an average net?

Sir Michael Shaw: I think it is 15 ft, but I am not absolutely certain. As I say, there are regulations, but fishermen are taking up drift netting without a licence. My licensed drift netters complain to me that little or nothing is done about it, not even, it is said, when offenders are pointed out to the bailiffs. One does not want to be hard on bailiffs because theirs is a difficult job, particularly with the law as it stands, but, when fishing of that sort goes on so obviously and nothing is done about it, it is tremendously discouraging, indeed almost inciting, to licensed drift netters. The complaint cannot be of a lack of regulation, but it must be said that there are grounds for serious complaint about lack of enforcement.

My drift netters are represented on the river Esk management committee and contribute one penny in the pound of gross earnings from salmon fishing towards an Esk stocking fund. The drift netters and those seeking to manage the Esk are working as one because they do not believe their interests are inimical. It is claimed that my Yorkshire drift net fishermen catch the salmon on their way north. That is true, but the corollary is that the salmon running into the Esk are not caught by local drift netters —they tend not to run at the same time. Why, then, is there such a dangerous drop in the number of salmon in the Esk? It is because poaching has developed into big business, because it has become known that efforts to prevent it are ineffective, and because wholesale poaching, particularly in the lower reaches of the river, is highly profitable.

All those connected with the river Esk—the riparian owners, the Esk management committee, the harbour committee and the fishermen—are united in believing that the cause is virtually uncontrolled poaching. The salmon get into the mouth of the river, but then they disappear. My hon. Friend the Member for Woking is right when he says that at night people dare not go anywhere near parts of the river. Some people who inadvertently go there and see what is going on pretend they have not seen anything and go away as fast as they can. It would be dangerous for them to do otherwise.

The law and the regulations are in existence and the duties laid upon the water authorities by the 1975 Act are quite clear. However, in the case of my constituents those duties are not being carried out effectively, and the longer poaching is left to go unchecked the harder it will be to control. The water authorities will have to do their best to take effective action, or perhaps things have become so impossible that the law itself will have to be changed. I do not know which it should be, but something will have to be done about it now.

It will take manpower, determination and money. There is not a water authority in existence which does not regret being responsible for looking after salmon waters. I have arranged a meeting later this month of interested parties with the chairman of the Yorkshire water authority to discuss action on the problem and we shall try to have some decisive action taken. The problem becomes more difficult year by year, and the longer such action is deferred the more difficult the problem will become to solve. Here we have a specific case in which the salmon have almost disappeared from a river which we know does not suffer from drift netting. Why should Scottish rivers be any different?

I am convinced that the cause of the problem in Scotland is poaching, and, of course, the fish caught are not counted. As with the Esk, there will be many houses near the rivers of Scotland with deep freezers, far more deep freezers than any single household could want, and they will contain 13, 14 or more salmon, caught we know not how but we can well guess. This is a serious problem and it has to be tackled. Poaching is the cause, poaching not only in the river but at sea as well. I say in all sincerity and without trying to be extreme that the licensed drift netters are not the culprits in this great problem.

7.40 pm

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I thoroughly enjoyed the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason). It was an excellent summary of the case for conservation. My right hon. Friend is a conservationist. I know that because I go fishing with him. He goes out of his way to make sure that he does not catch any fish—and that is only trout! His rule for salmon is that after he has caught 20, he goes home. I shall adopt no such rule.

Although I am on the council of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, my aim is not to speak for conservation. That is not where my interest lies, and I would be hypocritical if I said that. The hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said that we liked to look at salmon. That frustrates me. I like to catch them. I want salmon in our rivers so that we can catch them. It is cant to talk merely in terms of conservation. We want salmon in abundance so that we have a better chance of catching them when we go fishing, and that is my starting point.

There was some embarrassment on the Opposition Benches at the beginning of the debate because my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is a landowner and one of the gentry. I go from bad to worse by saying that he is a farmer and prosperous, but that should not mislead the House. One of the problems of arguing the case for salmon fishing is that it is associated only with the aristocracy and the gentry. That may be true of some rivers in Scotland, but it is not true of many places elsewhere.

When I attend a branch meeting of the Union of Communication Workers, two or three members out of the 30 or 40 present are often more interested in talking to me about salmon fishing than about the business of the evening. Salmon fishing is now attracting large numbers of working people.

I have the honour to be vice-president of the Potteries Angling Society whose latest acquisition is salmon water on the Severn. The society is proud of that. The hon. Member for Woking mentioned the Dovey. Welsh water is not aristocrat or gentry water; in general, it is owned and

controlled by clubs whose members are predominantly working people. Therefore, we are not talking about an aristocratic sport.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central said that the aristocracy has the best waters, the easiest to fish and in which to catch salmon. But, as president of the Lords and Commons Fly Fishermen's Club, my right hon. Friend knows that the aristocracy needs easier waters in which to fish. It has been our experience that Conservative Members need easier waters in which to fish. We must therefore accept that working people shall fish in harder water, but that is a handicap that society places upon us.

Fishing is for all, and salmon fishing ought to be for all. That is what I am concerned about. In fact, there has been an expansion in the number of salmon fishermen. I want to see more salmon in our rivers, because there are now more fishermen to catch them. I want to make it possible for people from all walks of life to go salmon fishing and to have the chance of catching salmon.

Several well canvassed hardships have been referred to in the debate, but before looking at some of the well rehearsed arguments about poaching and drift netting we ought to ask whether we are now fishing at the right time. If one looks at the statistics, it is clear that spring fishing —a euphemism for fishing in bitter, cold weather—has declined and that, sadly for those of us who work in the autumn, catches in the autumn appear to have remained at the same level. Someone must explain that phenomenon. If spring fishing has been badly hit and autumn fishing remains good, how can one blame the Faroes, Greenland or the drift fisheries? it may be that fishermen are now fishing at the wrong time and that the close season ought to be changed. Perhaps we should fish later in the year to accommodate the change in the run of the salmon. We must certainly look at that point and consider it, because perhaps we are partly to blame for fishing at the wrong time.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind that there is a limit to how far one can extend the season? After all, many fish in the autumn will shortly spawn and are totally unsuitable for fishing.

Mr. Golding: I do not know how far that is true. They are, of course, nearer to spawning than in the spring, but I should like to know how near to spawning they are in the autumn. If, as some have suggested, the fish are running later and spawning later, fishing could take place for an additional few weeks.

However, people prefer to fish at the traditional time. They will fish in the spring when there are no salmon in the rivers and will come away with bitterness in their hearts, but, when the salmon have arrived, they will have put their rods to rest. I accept that there is a limit to how far the season could be extended, but perhaps something could be done.

I strongly disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central and with most other salmon fishermen in their treatment of drift netting in the north-east. We simply cannot tell a group of men, "We will ban the way in which you earn your living."

Mr. Mason: We did it in Scotland 23 years ago.

Mr. Golding: Emotionally I am on the side of the netsmen. When I was a kid, I went to school with the sons of salmon fishermen. They had a rough time. Most of them suffered from malnutrition because the fishing was hard. Those youngsters suffered from TB, malnutrition, and so on. I saw the hardships of the net fisherman's life. We cannot, therefore, tell these people, "We are going to ban drift netting."

The argument, as I understand it, is that drift netting is a traditional method of fishing which, until the advent of monofilament nets, caught a moderate number of fish each year. That is the argument advanced by the Atlantic Salmon Trust. The logic of it is not to ban drift netting, but to ban the monofilament nets. Those who advocate the banning of monofilament nets do not advocate banning the use of boron or of nylon rods. They do not advocate the banning of new scientific fishing lines. We take advantage of all technological progress that makes it easier to catch salmon.

Dr. Godman: Most people who know about the range of fishing methods agree that drift net fishing is the least damaging to stock. If there was a spectrum of fishing gears, drift nets would be at one end and purse seine nets at the other. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Mr. Golding: I am not sufficiently knowledgeable about other methods of fishing.

Many things affect the numbers of salmon in the rivers. Each has to be dealt with separately. We cannot pick on one and say, "That is the solution." The logical thing is to control stocks. It is not the drift netting or the monofilament that is terrible. The problem is the rapid increase in the number of salmon taken out by the netsmen —77,000 now compared with 2,162 between 1950 and 1959. I do not want to go back to the 1950s because the north-eastern fishermen had as poor a living as the fishermen on the river Dee at Chester when I was a kid. I do not want to go back to the days of tiny catches. We want men working hard earning reasonable pay.

There are two answers. The first is control. If it is said that control is not enough, the answer must be to buy the fishermen out. I cannot understand why the Conservatives, who adopt such a cavalier attitude to property rights, do not agree. The fishermen have property rights to exploit the sea. Conservative Members say that we should ban them or confiscate their boats, but that is unacceptable. If the drift netters have to go, the only solution is to purchase their rights and give them compensation. Let the salmon fishermen get together and buy out those rights. I could justify and defend that. We cannot say to a group of working men, "So that we may enjoy our sport, you will lose your livelihood." That is not on. We must compensate for loss of property. I should have thought that when I mentioned the word "property", Conservative Members would immediately have been with me. My right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central has no property and would not respond to the argument in the same way as Conservative Members who have property and who should defend property rights.

Pollution must also be controlled. If one visits the Dovey, for example, one hears from the people who run the Dovey association that the biggest polluters are the farmers. I hope my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian is listening. He is a farmer and riparian owner on the Tweed. Opinion on the river bank on pollution is that the biggest culprits are farmers. Those who cause pollution are as important as poachers in the destruction of salmon

[Mr. Golding]

stocks. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that to heart and, when he goes home to his estate at the weekend, will check that he is not adding to pollution.

The Government must also investigate how salmon stocks are affected by acid rain.

In the south-west, pollution and poaching are connected. With the imposition of new controls on pollution, I am told that the south-west water authority is taking people away from their normal fishery control duties and putting them on pollution control. The National and Local Government Officers Association tells me that the authority is reducing the number of people who are patrolling the river banks. That will lead to more poaching.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central rightly attacks me for being weak-willed. I have listened to the difficulties that Government spokesmen have presented on tagging. My right hon. Friend has been bitter because I have approached the question with an open mind. He regards an open mind on it as totally reprehensible. Given all the custom and practice, it will be difficult to make a salmon tagging scheme work in Scotland. If it is difficult in Scotland, it will be difficult in the Lake District and in the north-east of England.

Mr. Mason: The Scots are holding us up.

Mr. Golding: My right hon. Friend says that the Scots are holding us up. The Scots have supported the Labour party throughout our history; certainly they have held us up.

We should not spend years arguing about the pros and cons of the salmon tagging scheme. If it is determined by the Government in good faith that the scheme will not work, we should turn our minds to how to stop poaching.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Bring back capital punishment.

Mr. Golding: My hon. Friend is going slightly too far. The poaching that takes place now is gangsterism. It is not the romantic poaching by the poor, starving family who nip out at midnight to pinch one of the laird's salmon. The police must be told that theft from a river is equivalent to theft from a building and that they must treat it as theft. The police must take strong action against that theft, and there must be no question of waters being additionally rated to provide money for the police, as has been suggested in Wales.

If we do not have salmon tagging, we must have adequate policing and adequate penalties must be enforced against those who steal salmon. If the tagging scheme fails because anglers, especially in Scotland, do not support it, we shall have to look at alternative methods of stopping poachers.

I want to see an increase in the number of salmon in our rivers. I welcome the creation of the new organisation which came into being partly from an initiative of the Atlantic Salmon Trust. We in Britain must do very much more to ensure that salmon get into and out of our rivers. I do not believe that the simple solutions that have been suggested will work. We must think hard about the solutions that the fishermen are presenting to the Government.

8.1 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Not for the first time, I agree with much of what was said by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) who spoke eloquently and entertained the House with his witticisms and the truth of his observations.

Like the hon. Gentleman, I am a staunch supporter of conservation; like him, my objective is to catch fish, but, like the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), I lack some of the skills that the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme possesses in abundance.

Mr. Mason: Poacher Golding!

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I do not believe the hon. Gentleman poaches. I am sure that he fishes according to the Marquess of Queensberry rules, though I doubt whether he would like his name to be associated with that of an aristocrat.

One of the fundamental points that has run through the debate is that there is no single cause for the decline in the number of salmon in the rivers of this country, Europe, Canada and the United States. There are many reasons, but I have to make some comments about drift netting, not because I want to make life hard for the folks who fish off the coast of Yorkshire and Northumberland, but because we must start somewhere.

The Hunter report is over 20 years old and many of us have read it and sat in on numerous meetings with representatives of the Atlantic Salmon Trust and stalwarts from the Salmon and Trout Association. I pay tribute to both organisations.

The two groups try to be united, but there is some disagreement and I believe that the Salmon and Trout Association is right to underline the need for estuarial control as well as control over drift net fishing. It is ludicrous that we have much poor control. Only one river board in Scotland gives us up-to-date and reasonably accurate statistics about how much is caught by rod and by net in its area. Reliable information is provided about salmon fishing in the Wye in Wales, but the paucity of information about what is caught by rod and net must be remedied. I hope that when the Government introduce legislation they will grasp that nettle. There has been a hesitant approach to reform because some say that there is not enough information. Another reason why action has been slow is that there are grounds for believing that the scientific evidence is inconclusive.

Ministers have told us that the biological functions are not properly understood, that we do not know enough about the genetic causes and that the information on oceanography is not as good as it might be. I make one simple point in reply to those Ministers. Unless we take some fairly obvious steps, we should not assume that there will not be a continuous decline, leading to the disappearance of salmon from our rivers.

It is interesting that the Canadians have decided that tagging is one way of dealing with their problem. They have also shortened the netting season and introduced dealer licensing.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has yet to speak, but it seems to me that we must be pragmatic and recognise that drift netters must have some effect on the number of fish that come into our rivers. Before ignoring the effect of the huge increase in the number of fish caught by drift netters, we should

consider what the Norwegians have done. They carried out a careful analysis and noted that in 1960 some fishermen started drift netting for salmon, mainly because white fish catches were declining. When the monofilament net was introduced in the early 1970s, salmon catches increased dramatically. In 1976, drift nets caught about 35 per cent. of catches in Norway, but that figure has now doubled.

Norwegian biologists have pointed out that drift nets catch mixed stocks of salmon, which results in a lack of control for each river stock. Salmon caught by drift nets are damaged fish and, therefore, not of first quality. As a result, they cannot be exported. Drift netting injures salmon and it has been estimated that in salt water of 20 per cent. salinity, 60 per cent. of heavily marked salmon die before spawning. A number of us have caught salmon by the rod and noted how some have been badly affected by the nets.

I do not suggest that we should necessarily ban drift netting off the coast of Northumberland and Yorkshire—though if we are not to do that, we need to hear a better case from those who support that fishing. If we do not ban drift netting, we should certainly ban the monofilament net. Otherwise, we shall be ignoring the evidence before our eyes and I do not see that we shall be able to make progress with the member nations of NASCO whom we criticise for having too large a quota.

I accept that the commercial exploitation and overfishing of the high seas has a serious effect. Some would argue that we need more evidence before we take action, but I do not believe that we can afford that luxury. The Greenlanders have already reduced the number of tonnes that they take and have agreed to reductions in the Faroes, but they made it clear this summer that they will not take further action until we put our house in order.

If we do not agree to the banning of drift netting, we should make a start by banning monofilament nets. I also have no doubt that we cannot allow the existing lack of enforcement to be perpetuated. It is wrong that so many people can make a business out of poaching. There is insufficient flexibility regarding estuary netting. River boards are not allowed to alter the length of their season without the authority of the Secretary of State. The Salmon and Trout Association went to much trouble and expense to oppose those with estuarial netting rights on the river Deveron. They argued that as they were not catching so many fish in the spring because of the shortage of spring fish the netting season should start later and be prolonged into the autumn. That policy is shortsighted and will not preserve salmon. The only way to test the matter was through a lengthy and costly inquiry. The Government must intervene or we shall return to the long rigmarole which costs money, wastes time and has not resulted in the protection of salmon.

The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central suggested that farm salmon might ease the problem. However, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) that that would not be the case. There was such an example when the price of salmon dropped considerably because farm salmon was brought over from Ireland. That only encouraged more people to fish with nets to make up for the loss of income. For that reason alone, the benefits of farm salmon are dubious.

My next point is not a frivolous one. Most of the top-class restaurants that pay the premium price put wild salmon on the menu, not farm salmon. People pay for it because they believe that there is a difference. I do not believe that there is a noticeable difference. Any difference is more attributable to how the salmon is cooked. My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border, Mr. Maclean, looks sceptical. He is entitled to his opinion and I suspect that more people hold his view than hold mine.

The matter becomes complex when the problems of water abstraction and pollution are added. That is why successive Governments have not taken action. Representatives of the Scottish Office are here, as is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture—the Minister is away at the moment—so I hope that this message will get through and that there will be an undertaking in the Queen's Speech to introduce legislation to help achieve our objectives.

8.13 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I welcome the order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I promise to be brief. I wish to correct the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who said that I had great expertise in the fishing industry. That is not true. I am an observer rather than an expert on fisheries.

The hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) said that the single reason—I almost said the sole reason—for the diminution of salmon caught in Scottish rivers was poaching. There are several reasons for the decline in the salmon catch in Scottish rivers. A mixture of natural and human factors must be considered. We must examine the problems generated by the drift net fishing activities of the Yorkshire and Northumberland fishermen. I have met some of these laddies and I have much sympathy with them because of the attacks made upon them in the House and elsewhere. I said in an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) that drift net fishing using the traditional gear is the least damaging of commercial fishing activities. Drift net fishing in the herring fishery is not damaging to stocks—certainly nowhere near as damaging as purse seine fishing. However, the nylon monofilament net is a danger. It is a savagely sophisticated piece of technology, and is perhaps too advanced to harvest stocks that are in a fragile state.

Advances in fishing gear technology sometimes outstrip the resources that it harvests. We have seen that purse seine gear can be highly damaging to young fish and can almost wipe out fisheries, and we are witnessing similar developments with the nylon monofilament nets.

In his fine speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) also outlined the dangers presented by discarded and lost remnants of nets to fish, sea birds and animals. The technology of the gear used must enhance the fair and efficient management of stocks. That is essential.

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman, with his knowledge and experience, accept that the technology must take some account of the safety of fishermen, and that the ability to work by day has considerable advantages?

Dr. Godman: I readily accept what the hon. Gentleman says. I have argued several times in the House that when debating commercial fisheries we must always take into account the safety of fishermen and their vessels.

[Dr. Godman]

It may be necessary to restrict the activities of the English drift net fishermen, but I would not wish to deprive those men of their livelihoods.

I welcome what my hom. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme said about a buy-out. About six or eight months ago, I said in the House that if we restrict the activities of those fishermen we must talk about compensation. They must not be forced out of the fishery without some compensation or the offer of alternative livelihoods in the fishing industry. They do not all own or crew huge £1 million vessels. Some of the vessels are small cobles sailing out of Whitby and other small ports in England. We are talking about restrictions, but we should be talking about quotas, and we must debate compensation.

Much more must be done to reduce the activities of fishermen in the north Atlantic, despite the concessions made by the Greenland authorities. We must also examine carefully the arguments of those who oppose tagging. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) rightly said, this would present formidable problems to the salmon fish farmers in his constituency and in other areas of Scotland. He talked about their being fledgling industrial outfits. Some of them are only one-man operations, and it would be an onerous responsiblilty on them to tag fish. Have not some countries adopted a licensing scheme for those who deal in salmon? We must do something about the serious social evil of poaching. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme was right in saying that it is a form of gangsterism, and that it must be tackled comprehensively.

Salmon is part of our national heritage, and it is essential that it remains so.

8.20 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glagow (Dr. Godman), like many hon. Members who have spoken, speaks with great authority. I am pleased that the debate has had the attention of several Secretaries of State, including my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Transport, and for the Environment. The latter, who listened to part of the debate, seemed to be wearing his fishing suit, which shows his anxiety about the salmon fishing industry.

To take part in the debate at this stage is like talking to a great squire of the north, possibly the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), renting some fishing from him, paying a large sum for the privilege, sitting by the river bank, and seeing salmon appear, only to have the salmon taken by others who are illegally fishing, because many of the points have been made. My hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) outlined all the points that should be made.

I join with those who welcome the orders. NASCO's object is to contribute through consultation and co-operation to the conservation and rational management of salmon stocks. Our salmon stocks are an important national asset, and some coherent action between EC states is necessary to ensure that it is preserved. Whether the viability of the asset is at risk is in doubt. I take the strongest view that it is seriously at risk. The viability of our salmon fishing should be of proper concern to NASCO when it sets up in Edinburgh. It is sufficiently serious that fish stocks are in danger, yet it is not appreciated that Scottish salmon fisheries are also threatened.

Reference has been made to the figures for the past five years, which I extracted in a series of questions to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who takes a great interest in the matter. They show a substantial decline in the number of salmon caught by rod and line in Scottish rivers from the figures 20 years ago, and all my evidence shows that the trend is continuing. During the past 18 months I have expressed anxiety to my hon. Friend in questions and correspondence, not because I have a great interest in the matter, but because many individual fishermen, who are customers, have brought the decline of salmon stocks to my notice. Some of them, like the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding), are nature's aristocrats, others are less nobly born, but all of them care about fishing.

If a customer does not think it worthwhile coming to fish, the industry is threatened. Such is the decline in the number of fish in Scottish rivers that the industry, which may bring in £100 million or more to the Scottish economy——

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: More.

Mr. Baker: —is in serious danger.

I have been struck by the extraordinary complacency with which some people in Scotland regard the matter. The owners of fishing rights continue to let their beats. No doubt the fine reputation of Scottish rivers is their best selling point, but the customers are now changing. Long-term fishermen are less and less likely to return to beats where they must seek their consolation in the tales of yesteryear's catches. Overseas customers will certainly replace them for a while, but only a while. The further a customer must travel to fish, the more he expects to take fish wherever the river is, and the quicker he will decide not to return, if the promise of salmon is not borne out.

The complacency is baffling and untypical. Those who adopt that attitude may think that the decline can be reversed in some easy or miraculous way. Perhaps they do not talk about it because they fear that they may accelerate the conclusion that we all fear. However, the longer decisive action is delayed, the longer any reversal of that decline will be postponed.

So far, many steps have been mentioned. I was extremely interested in the comments of Opposition Members about poaching because the poaching that takes place in rivers is similar to that which occurs in the countryside generally — not the charming old-world poaching to relieve the meagre diet of a family in need, but that of organised, armed and motorised gangs.

I wish to stress two points. The first relates to drift netting along the Northumbrian coast. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme says that we should buy out those involved. Although that is a perfectly sensible approach, we should first deal with illegal fishing. All hon. Members have produced figures and, indeed, I have many. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) will know as much about this as anyone, but I see no distinction in the figures between legal and illegal fishing. The Northumbrian argument that drift netting is traditional is only partly true. Until 20 years ago old-fashioned cord nets were used. They were cumbersome,

heavy and hard to work. Now monofilament nylon nets are used, which are light, cover miles of sea, are wasteful, damage fish and, in many cases, kill them.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Woking that fishing in daylight by those means should be banned. It is said that the jobs of 500 men could be at risk, but my information is that many of those jobs are part-time. Serious consideration should be given to the redeployment and conservation work that will be required of those who are engaged full time in legal fishing in that part of the world.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman may be unaware that part-time fishermen are disqualified from holding a licence under the Northumbrian water authority.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman is also well informed, and he will have a chance to develop his point later.

The risk to those jobs must be compared with the much greater risk to jobs in Scotland, which are in peril. The figures show how the catch has increased, and demand that action is taken to deal with that aspect of the matter.

The second nettle which has to be grasped—it is one which has only just been clutched—is the rise of the greatest predator of fishing stocks, the seal. It is reckoned that in 1920 there were about 10,000 seals around the British coast. It is probable that there are now 80,000, most of which live off the Scottish coast. If a seal eats about 10 lb of fish in a day—it will not all be salmon but let us say that 1 per cent. of it is and that the average weight of a salmon is about 8 lb — about 365,000 salmon a year are taken by seals. That is greater than the total number of salmon that are taken by all means in a year in Scotland. If seals are allowed free breeding grounds and to increase in the way that they are doing, their numbers are likely to double to about 160,000 over 10 years. The effect of such a seal population upon salmon stocks would be devastating.

I do not want to see the extermination of seals, but, for the sake of fish, salmon stocks and jobs, I believe that conservation of the species has gone too far and some degree of control is essential. I recommend that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland should consider the measures that have been taken in Canada to exercise control over the seal population. He should examine carefully the dramatic increase in the salmon population which resulted from the exercise of that control. If the prospect of such control seems alarming, it must be remembered that, if nothing is done, the prospect will be worse for fish stocks as well as for the natural environment. The process of explanation for the public has to begin shortly, and that must be done on a European basis. I believe that NASCO should be capable of starting this work. Scottish salmon fishing is an important national asset for jobs, and the environment and the economy of the rural highlands depend upon it. It is in decline, and the decline could easily become permanent. Let us not be found wanting in its defence.

8.32 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): It is apparent from what has been said already that my constituency and its people have some interest in this matter. They have scarcely been omitted from any of the speeches that have been made from both sides of the Chamber.

My constituency contains the Tweed, which is one of the world's great salmon rivers. The lower reaches of the Tweed are wholly within my constituency and, therefore, within England. For much of its length the river provides the boundary between England and Scotland. The constituency contains other salmon rivers, including the Coquet, which is a carefully regulated river: there is a systematic method of counting every salmon that passes up the Coquet. If Conservative Members would like more information on the procedures involved and the data that are available, they should look to the Northumbria water authority, which provides a massive amount of detailed information on the fish counting that takes place along the rivers for which it is responsible. Those rivers include the Coquet but not the Tweed.

In my constituency there are three groups engaged in salmon fishing. There are those who fish by rod and line, those who fish by river net cast into the Tweed, and those who use drift nets at sea. All these fisheries are long established over many centuries. Every one of them has a claim to involvement in the process by which man catches salmon and by which he seeks to catch a proportion without destroying the fishery for the future. Every one of these groups has an interest in ensuring that there is a sensible conservation policy. In my view, none of them is entitled to say to any of the other groups, "My group will catch the salmon and you have no right to do so." Any sensible conservation policy must be a balance between the various interests.

As I have said, there is the rod-and-line fishery, and we have good salmon beats on the Tweed and its tributary, the Till. There is great pride in the quality of the fish that is taken. There is a long history of the development of a well organised fishery and, of course, jobs are involved. I am fully aware of the employment dimension, which is important to many parts of Scotland as well as the area which I represent.

There is a long established system of catching salmon by means of a river net. The net is taken out into the river and there is a rowing boat at the other end. In any argument about which sort of fishery is legitimate, it is not possible to say that it is right to catch salmon with a rod, right to catch it by means of a net in the river and wrong to catch it in the sea, or vice versa. It can be claimed that the chances of the salmon reaching the spawning ground are more greatly imperilled by the blockage of the river by nets than by of length of net out in the sea. That sort of argument, however, is fruitless and it is my contention that all three means of catching salmon have been engaged in for generations and that they have legitimate and similar claims as long as we can catch salmon at all and ensure the salmon stock. If that can be assured, no one group should be excluded.

Drift net fishing at sea has been referred to especially during the debate. It provides a livelihood for many in fishing ports along the coasts such as Holy Island, Seahouses, Boulmer, Beadnell and Amble, or it means that they can have an all-round fishing livelihood. Salmon fishing can be supplemented in the winter by other fishing activities such as lobster and crab fishing, but anyone who is demonstrated to be other than a full-time bona fide fisherman — I underline a point that I made in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) — is disqualified from holding a licence or being an endorsee of a licence that is issued by the Northumbrian water authority. Vigorous steps are taken to enforce that regulation. There are so many people who would like a salmon licence that anyone who breaks

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

a condition of the licence will be in peril of being reported immediately. It is a feature of the licensing system that any infringement is open to ready reporting by others who would like to be licence holders or endorsees.

There are many coastal villages and fishing [illegible] along my constituency and, further south, along that of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), who spoke eloquently earlier in the debate, where drift net fishing for salmon provides an important part of the livelihood of fishermen.

There are enforcement problems in all of the three sectors of salmon fishing which I have described. Unfortunately, poaching takes place in every sector. It takes place in the river spawning grounds and is present in and around the rod-and-line fishing community. It takes place in the river, where net fishing takes place. There is a considerable amount of illegal drift net fishing at sea, notably on the Scottish side of the border where there is no legal fishery and no licensed fishermen who have a strong incentive to point out that infringements or illegal activities are taking place. There is thought to be a large illegal take of the catch on the Scottish side of the border.

Conservation must involve a balance between the groups that I have mentioned. It is a complicated problem that involves many factors, many of which have been mentioned during the debate but not all. Some scientists contend that the salmon goes through a cyclical pattern, which is now changing. It seems that a shift in the seasonal salmon cycle may be taking place. A "World About Us" programme on BBC television in May cast doubt on many of the contentions that have been advanced by those on both sides of the argument. It laid particular stress on the probability that the salmon cycle is shifting so that the main salmon runs are now taking place outside the traditional salmon seasons. That must be tested along with all the other scientific contentions, but it is an illustration of the complexity of the scientific argument and the amount of discussion that is taking place.

A decline in the salmon rivers on the west of Scotland and the west of England cannot be attributed to licensed drift net fishing that is taking place on the east coast of England. The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) spoke earlier about problems arising in the Solway. Those problems cannot be attributed to drift net fishing off the east coast of England. The decline of the salmon seems so widespread around our shores that there must be explanations for it other than drift net fishing. That does not absolve us from examining whether there is too much drift net fishing and whether it should be restricted, but it certainly removes the argument that drift net fishing is the principal explanation for what is happening to the salmon cycle.

I mentioned the possibility of the salmon cycle being changed, but a number of other factors are relevant. The hon. Member for Dorset, North mentioned seals, which are a problem about which fishermen are especially aware. The same television programme which I just prayed in aid for arguing that the salmon cycle is the most important factor argued against the fishermen's view on seals. However, simple observation suggests that the capacity of seals to eat fish, their large numbers and the ingenuity with which they make their way to salmon nets are all evidence of their ability to reduce the salmon stock. It is common for fishermen to see a seal taking the fish out of their nets. It is obvious that the seal is a common cause of visible damage to salmon. Quickness to attribute damage to monofilament nets underestimates the extent to which salmon are damaged by seals.

In my area on the Farne islands there are large numbers of seals that are culled periodically by the National Trust. The National Trust assumes that the constantly increasing colony numbers threaten the other aspects of its conservation policy — the birds for which it is responsible. Seals destroy the birds' habitat. The culling is carried out not for the benefit of fishermen but to maintain the natural habitat of the various species on the islands. If it did not occur, the problem would be even worse.

Much has been said about the additional problems that the monofilament net may create. Some aspects have been forgotten. Some hon. Members pointed out that the use of the monofilament net led to an increase both in catch and in the activity of drift net fishing and that it was part of the process by which the licensing system was introduced. There is a reason for that. It was difficult to operate the hemp net, which was unsuitable for day-time operation. This meant that the fishing had to be done at night, which posed considerable dangers for fishermen and was hazardous to shipping. It is difficult to accommodate that form of fishing alongside other maritime activity. That is one reason why the massive drift net fishery off the Tyne during the 19th century declined. Later, the Tyne lost its position as a major salmon river. We hope that it will recover that position one day, but it was not the net fishermen who caused the decline of the Tyne as a salmon river. The ability to work a net primarily by day is a considerable advantage in a dangerous occupation. Hon. Members should not make light of the safety of fishermen.

Hon. Members should not be surprised that fishermen, like any other group, including anglers, modernise and look for new and efficient operating methods. The angler has changed his technology dramatically over the years. One presumes that he has done so with the objective of catching not fewer fish but more fish. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) was honest enough to admit that. At times I formed the impression from some speeches that anglers were intent upon catching as few fish as possible and that only those who went to sea with drift nets had any other objective.

The former Minister of State — the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor)—recently said:

"Our scientists have looked at this question and it is very clear that there is no evidence of monofilament nets causing any more damage to fish than other types of netting."

He continued:

"I am not in favour of banning these nets. If the scientists' reports do show that there is overfishing, then we must tackle this in other ways."

That is what the hon. Gentleman said after he had had a chance to look at the position.

That leads me to what might be done to ensure that there is a conservation policy. I reiterate my assumption that any conservation policy must bear upon all those who have a legitimate involvement in catching salmon. I can hardly include under that criterion a policy that simply involves buying out the north-east drift net fisherman. It is at least a preferable option, so far as he is concerned, to banning his activity. That the activity could be banned without giving any consideration to the livelihood of those involved is a grotesque proposition.

Buying out, however, presents many problems. It is not morally justified as an alternative to regulating the activities of the fisherman. If we embarked upon this approach, we would immediately come across a difficulty. The assumption of the regulatory system is that the descendants of the fisherman can continue in that fishery. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme described it as being even more amenable to Conservative Members —it is not only property rights; it is inheritable property rights. The assumption is that the fishing community will continue to live by the father passing the licence on to the son. We are talking about buying out not one generation but a right of succession. If we attempted to buy out the fishermen, this would be greatly at the expense of fishing communities. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme asked his colleagues to compare that industry with others where there has been a decline. There is no reason why there should be a total cessation of the fishery. The salmon industry is not faced with quite the same difficulties as coal or steel. We should not talk about having to buy out whole communities from an activity in which they have been engaged for generations.

We should be considering other positive measures more carefully. I have some sympathy with the idea of tagging. When I was in Canada a year ago I had the opportunity to look at the procedures used there. Tagging poses problems, including those associated with fish farming. With a salmon tagging system it will be much easier and probably cheaper to buy salmon steak and very difficult to buy a whole fish, because that will have a tag. I remember when salmon was much cheaper. On a special occasion, we used to buy a whole salmon or salmon trout. It is now far too expensive for any normal family to contemplate that.

We must look at effort limitation—of national quotas and at the effort used by an individual fisherman whether in the sea or the river. We should consider the amount of effort a fisherman is entitled to put in and the quantity of fish that he is allowed to take. If too many fish are caught, the total number must be regulated. We should consider the measures used for regulation. We must ask the Government to lay before the House as dispassionately as is possible in this highly emotive subject the best scientific evidence available on all the propositions and counter propositions. We ask Ministers in the Scottish Department of Agriculture and in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to put their heads together to produce evidence that both sides of the argument can see as being the best distillation of scientific opinion so that we all have a better basis for judgment. No valuable purpose is served by wild allegations, by talking about banning the livelihoods of substantial groups of people or threatening the livelihood of other groups unless evidence is placed before us which we can agree has a sound basis. The Government have a responsibility to do that, just as they have a responsibility to look to the livelihoods of all those who gain their living from the salmon in its progress through our sea and rivers.

8.48 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): I agree with the closing comments of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that it would be enormously helpful if the House had before it the best and most recent scientific evidence available on all aspects of salmon. The hon. Gentleman said that no one had the right to say, "We shall catch salmon but you have no right to do so." He should be reminded that that was said—perhaps unluckily for those concerned, albeit luckily for all others who have an interest in salmon — to the Scottish salmon drift netsmen. I would not suggest that it should be repeated to north-east coast fishermen. If there is to be any banning or reduction of salmon netting on the north-east coast, there must be compensation.

I want to ram home and repeat some of the points that have been made during the debate, but I hope that after the debate the Government will do something rather than weep crocodile tears and do nothing, as has been the case with successive Governments for far too long.

Man is a hunter, man is commercial, and man likes to eat salmon.

Mr. Maxton: And women.

Mr. Morrison: Mankind, I mean.

As a result, there are fewer salmon in our rivers. One only has to ask any ghillie, individual or river owner who has long experience of any particular river to gain confirmation of that fact. I accept that the detailed blame for that situation is manifold. The detection of salmon in the north Atlantic, and therefore the harvesting of salmon, was unknown in earlier times. Monofilament nets are undoubtedly efficient, but they are excessive in what they harvest, apart from the fact that they damage many fish. Anybody who fishes regularly on a salmon river knows that very well.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), I believe that in many areas there are excessive and increasing numbers of seals. There is the increase in poaching, the north-east coast drift netting, the stake nets and the drag nets. Against all that armoury, it is a miracle that any salmon escape at all to swim up the rivers to breed and, before they can do that, to run the gauntlet of rod fishermen and perhaps a few otters.

I do not accept that the serious salmon situation can be solved by special pleading on behalf of one interest or ascribing blame totally to any or all interests as long as they are not one's own. I am convinced that all interests will have to make concessions. The high seas fishermen will have to be limited in the amount of their catch. Monofilament nets should be outlawed. The number of seals will have to be reduced, certainly in some areas. Much greater efforts must be made to control poaching at sea, and that probably means greater assistance for the fisheries squadron of the Royal Navy, which does such excellent work. On land it is clear that the police must be given greater assistance in their efforts to control poaching.

Reference has been made to salmon tagging, and that could be a help, but I am not yet convinced that the introduction of a salmon tagging scheme is a practical possibility. The administration available for it in Scotland hardly exists, and the cost would be high. I have seen one recent estimate that it would cost £2·6 million to introduce such a scheme. While I am in favour of salmon tagging in principle, I believe that it needs a good deal more thought before it becomes a practical possibility.

North-east coast drift netting will have to be limited. That may mean compensation. Stake and drag netting may have to accept longer close seasons or close weekends, or, as the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) said, some of those netsmen may have to be bought out, if they are prepared to be bought out. Even rod

[Mr. Morrison]

fishermen, including the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) and I, may have to accept limits on what we catch. That would not be very difficult, because in my case the catch happens to be pretty low anyway.

Unusually, I may be preaching that there should be equality of misery, but if all interests are unprepared to accept that they have a responsibility, the situation will continue to worsen. Then, not only will rod fishermen lose their sport, that part of the Scottish tourist industry dependent upon the salmon die, ghillies, hoteliers and others benefiting from that tourism lose their jobs and some Scottish estates go bankrupt, but netsmen will lose their livelihood. If those disasters are not to occur, I am convinced that the Government must give a stronger lead, legislate if and where necessary, and accept the need for compensation. Until that happens, the husbanding of the salmon as an important resource will continue to be inadequate.

8.56 pm

Mr. Home Robertson *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am grateful.

This has been a wide-ranging and interesting debate. One of the wide-ranging issues that has been covered is innuendo about my alleged interest in fisheries on the Tweed. I should like to clarify the matter. I am not interested in fishing, if I may dare say that in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). It is true that my farm borders on the banks of the river Tweed, but in that spot it is tidal, which means that it is affected by different legislation. As far as I know, it is of little interest to anglers. I do not want to derive any benefit from that water. I hope that that clarifies the issue.

All the conflicting interests that have been expressed by hon. Members from various parts of the country demonstrate the need for a review of freshwater fisheries legislation. Far too many people hold the present legislation in contempt. They feel that it is simply protecting privileges. That certainly contributes to the level of illegal fishing with monofilament nets. That chaos is contributing towards the threat to salmon stocks, about which so much concern has been expressed during the debate.

I return to order for one sentence. I repeat that we for our part wish the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation well.

8.57 pm

Mr. Rifkind *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Rifkind: As a simple Foreign Office Minister whose responsibility in the debate is simply to recommend an order that confers immunities and privileges on the two members of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation, who I think live in Edinburgh, but neither of whom is my constituent as far as I am aware, I have been literally out of my depth in this wide-ranging and valuable debate. I commend hon. Members on both sides of the House for the unprecedented expertise, passion and conviction that they have devoted to the subject. This has been a worthwhile opportunity to give vent to the many issues of serious concern.

I should respond to the specific questions that were put to me about the order. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) asked a crucial question about whether the two employees of NASCO would be immune from parking fines as a result of the immunities and privileges provided under the order. Although I suppose that the two gentlemen in question will be less happy to hear it, I am happy to assure him that they will not be so immune. As I said in my opening remarks, they are receiving not the privileges available to diplomatic agents but simply those which are essential to the carrying out of their proper responsibilities.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked about research by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation and the funding implications of that. NASCO does not have to fund research. It enjoys the benefits of the extensive international research programmes co-ordinated by the international commission for the exploration of the sea, to which the United Kingdom is a contributing partner.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the funding for NASCO and whether there would be a British contribution to the organisation. The United Kingdom participates in NASCO, not in its own right but as a member of the European Community. Therefore, the funding of NASCO is by the signatories, of which the European Community is the single largest contributor with a contribution of £40,590. Clearly, the United Kingdom pays its normal share of Community expenditure in that respect.

As I have said, much of the debate covered more wide-ranging issues which do not immediately arise out of the order. Therefore, I hope that the House will forgive me if my comments are very brief.

There was considerable discussion of the problems of illegal fishing and salmon poaching. I am well aware of the seriousness with which the matter is regarded in many quarters. Indeed, I recall that it is said of a former Scottish sheriff that, in sentencing a person convicted of poaching, he remarked that the defendant had been convicted of a most serious crime, and went on to say that he might almost describe it as a crime against humanity. Nevertheless, the Government recognise the seriousness of the problem and are making a thorough examination of it, with particular reference to the proposals for a tagging scheme. The Government are also considering other ways of tackling the problem of illegal salmon fishing.

Final decisions have not yet been taken. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said in his reply to a written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on 21 October, the Government hope to make an announcement on the issue in the near future.

I understand that among the difficulties that a workable salmon tagging scheme would have to overcome would be how to deal effectively with imports, and with our own farm salmon production, without disrupting normal trade. It would also, of course, be necessary to provide secure control of the many tags that would be required each year.

My right hon. Friend intends to make an announcement on the matter in the future, and I hope that the House will feel able to wait for that.

Mr. Mason: In spite of the difficulties that the Minister has mentioned, may I take it from what he has said, and his knowledge of what the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has in mind, that the Ministry has not closed its mind to the introduction of a salmon tagging scheme?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman any details as to what is likely to be in the announcement. All I can say is that the examination that has been taking place includes a possible tagging scheme as well as other proposals for dealing with the problem of illegal salmon fishing. I must ask the right hon. Gentleman to await the announcement which I understand will be made in the near future.

With regard to the equally complicated and serious matter of drift netting, clearly there is a difference of view between hon. Members on the desirability of extending the present ban in Scotland to drift netting in England. Drift netting off the coast of England is not an intercepting fishery in terms of the NASCO convention. The convention deals with fishing beyond the 12-mile limit. Therefore, this matter is not relevant to the convention that the House is considering this evening.

However, the Government accept the need for careful constraint on net fishing for salmon. Although this fishery is already strictly regulated by the Northumbrian and Yorkshire water authorities, the Goverment have been reviewing the arrangements to see whether they should be further tightened. My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland hope to make an announcement on this matter.

The House will have seen that my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), who is the Minister responsible for these matters in the Scottish Office, was able to attend a large part of this debate. I know that he and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will wish to study very carefully the many important contributions made by hon. Members on both sides of the House during this relatively brief but very important debate. It is on that basis that I commend the orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 17th July, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Immunities and Privileges of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 17th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Rifkind.]*

Transport Bill [Money] (No. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure of the Secretary of State—

(a) in respect of remuneration and allowances paid to deputy traffic commissioners;

(b) resulting from the establishment of a Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

9.6 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is quite wrong that we should seek to pass this money resolution without making comment on it. This is typical of the way that the entire buses Bill has been handled since it was first brought before the House. What is happening at the moment is that we are rewriting this major piece of legislation as we go along. There have been not hundreds of amendments but possibly as many as 2,000, most of them coming from the Government, during the passage of the Bill, and it is extraordinary that tonight we are being asked to add, in a money resolution, two basic changes. While minor in themselves, these changes demonstrate very well some of the problems that have arisen during the passage of the Bill.

For example, the motion states:

"That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment . . . in respect of remuneration and allowances paid to deputy traffic commissioners".

This arises from the fact that Government's initial intention was that the general public should have very little access to the traffic commissioners. It was only an extremely serious amendment in Committee that changed this particular Bill. Then in another place the legislation was changed, but not, frankly, improved. We shall probably see during the discussion tomorrow a very clear indication that the Government's attitude towards the general public is that, if there is something wrong with transport, the police and the local authorities should have the right to make representations but the traffic commissioners should not.

We have suddenly had this added rush to put money into the Bill because the Minister has decided that there is going to be such general chaos, so many people rushing to the assessors or the traffic commissioners, that there will be considerable expenditure on fees for those ladies and gentlemen. While I welcome this rather tardy recognition of the fact that there will be a great deal of chaos following the passage of the Bill, it seems to me extraordinary that at the last minute there should be a demonstration, yet again, of the cavalier attitude that Ministers have taken throughout the passage of the legislation.

Turning to the second part of this money resolution, the authorisation of payment relates to the establishment of a disabled persons transport advisory committee. This is a very important matter which concerned us very much throughout the passage of the Bill. We wanted to make clear to the Government that at present many local authorities provide a very high standard of transport for the disabled. It is important that that be retained, taken in conjunction with the abolition of the metropolitan counties, but there is clear evidence that no such thing will happen.

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

We are now told by the Government, almost at the last minute, that we should have moneys for the establishment of a disabled persons transport advisory committee. It is therefore useful to look at the wording of the clause to find out exactly what the Bill is going to do. It becomes painfully obvious that the committee may consider any matter which is referred to it by the Secretary of State. It will also have the inestimable advantage of making a report to the Secretary of State, who will actually lay a copy of it before Parliament. The committee will have no power to insist that those who benefit at present from provision for the disabled will receive the same standard of care in the future. It is plain from the weak and waffling language of the clause that the advisory committee, as it is set up, will have matters referred to it by the Secretary of State and will have the great honour of being able to consider them, but it will be unable to come up with any real plan that would change the attitude of those transport authorities that will have to provide the services.

There is clearly a difference in the way that the Conservative party regards the capital and the rest of the country. Throughout the Bill's passage, we discussed the fact that London is to be excluded, and we asked why, if the buses Bill is such a great innovation and will do such a fantastically good job, the capital is being deprived of that high quality service. We are told that the Secretary of State intends that it shall apply to the capital before long.

When we consider this part of the money resolution, we find that the division between town and country is even stronger than we suspected. London has been given an extra £5 million to deal with the problems of the disabled, after the GLC has been abolished, because London's voters have a clear view of the excellence of the service. Those of us who have seen it working know that it is an accurate view. The work done by the GLC in providing transport for the disabled of London has set a high standard that could be copied to considerable advantage elsewhere in the country. In effect, we shall have a two-tier attitude — the GLC receives £5 million while the rest of the country receives nothing. On that basis, I am afraid that we can only assume that, as with so much of the Bill, the Secretary of State has not worked out the effect that that will have on the transport industry as a whole and on the lives of ordinary people, or the way that it will operate.

Tomorrow we shall be considering the final stage of a massive piece of legislation which will completely alter the bus industry. Yet here we are — not just at the eleventh hour, but at the eleventh hour and——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Fifty-nine minutes.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My hon. Friend says 59 minutes, but I prefer to say 55 minutes — making massive changes which will suddenly, we are told, provide money for two basic parts of the legislation.

Had the Bill been properly prepared, none of that general atmosphere of incompetence would have originated. Had the Transport Bill become the Transport Act 1986, there would have been time for consultation with the relevant authorities and with the various groups, such as the disabled and those who provide specialised transport. There would have been at least time for the parliamentary draftsmen to produce a piece of legislation that did not need to be written once, or twice, but all the time in both places, because the House of Lords must have dealt with even more amendments than we did in the House of Commons.

This change was requested not once, but several times, and was discussed ad infinitum in Committee. It was finally brought forward on Report in another place. If that is not a classic demonstration of at best incompetence and at worst a totally unprepared, ill thought out and very damaging piece of legislation, I should like to know what is.

The Secretary of State for Transport has pushed the Bill through although it is badly drafted. Half the people who have been consulted are totally opposed to it. The reaction of the Conservative party in country areas shows that those who know about the needs of rural areas and of transport are absolutely opposed to this legislation. Yet, even now, the House is being asked to make various changes.

If the Secretary of State for Transport would like to do us all a great favour, even at this late stage, he should not be making tiny changes here and there which he thinks ought to have been made before, but which somehow or other he could not bring himself to accept; he should not be redrafting right up to the moment when the legislation leaves the other place; he should be saying "At long last I am demonstrating a side of my nature which no one suspected. I am an infinitely reasonable, tolerant and intelligent man, so I have decided that the best possible thing to do with the Transport Bill is to throw it into the wastepaper basket."

9.17 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I agree with the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), but I was concerned when she said that the Minister was treating the GLC and therefore London differently from the rest of the country because the Minister may find the income available for the disabled persons transport advisory committee within the GLC to carry out any amendments that it wants but not make that money available for the rest of the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich will remember that a difference was revealed between the pensioners in London and those in the rest of the country in the debate that we had on concessionary bus passes. There was also a difference of opinion among the Tory Back Benchers on our Committee considering the Transport Bill and the Tory Back Benchers on the Committee of the London Regional Transport Bill. The Tory Back Benchers on the London Regional Transport Bill had backbone whereas the Tory Back Benchers on our Bill had no backbone at all and did not have the guts to support our amendment, which would have written into the Transport Bill the same amendment that was written into the London Regional Transport Bill and thus have guaranteed pensioners concessionary passes. I am rather surprised therefore of the reaction of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich as the fact that there is no money available for areas outside London although money is available for London is consistent with the Secretary of State's track record.

I do not oppose this money resolution because it will provide remuneration for people on the disabled persons transport advisory committee. Funds will also be made available for the deputy traffic commissioners. The Bill will give the Secretary of State power to appoint members to the committee and to grant remuneration. Not only will

the Secretary of State be able to appoint his hacks but he will be able to decide how much his hacks get. Every time we have discussed London transport, the Secretary of State has talked about Ken Livingstone providing jobs for the boys. Under this Bill the Secretary of State will appoint a number of deputy commissioners or whatever their designation may be and after he has appointed them he will decide how much to pay them.

With this little measure the Secretary of State has done what he was determined from the outset to do. He said that he would rewrite the Bill and he has done just that, but he has not changed the plot. The result will be chaos in the transport industry. Even on Third Reading in the House of Lords, there were 70 amendments. An ill-conceived Bill has been rushed through by a Secretary of State with very little idea how transport should be run. The result will be chaos and those who suffer most will be people in the rural areas and in metropolitan districts such as Tyne and Wear, where one of the best transport systems in the country will be in jeopardy. Therefore, although we shall not oppose this little money resolution today, we shall certainly make our voices heard in relation to the Bill itself tomorrow.

9.20 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Those of us who took part in the Committee stage of the Transport Bill and who are said to have no spine are especially grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for introducing the amendments in the money resolution. It comes very badly from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) to say that the Bill is ill-conceived, as we remember sitting for hours on end listening to opening speeches from the Opposition on clause 1 which amounted to general statements about transport in this country. Those speeches took up almost 100 hours of the Committee's time, with the result that the Bill was guillotined. The hon. Lady cannot complain that the Bill was ill-conceived and that there was no consultation when the Opposition set out from the beginning to prevent any sensible discussion on it.

Provision for the disabled is a prominent feature of the money resolution. I and my colleagues in the Committee —two or three of them are present today—welcome the provisions for the disabled persons transport advisory committee. Conservative Members made it clear to the Secretary of State that special provision ought to be made for the disabled and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took our advice and undertook to amend the Bill. He has fulfilled that undertaking and carried it through to the House of Lords. Whatever the Opposition may say, that stance on the part of the Secretary of State resulted from the initiative taken by Conservative Members of the Committee. So much for the criticism that we had no spine and no guts. It is because we stood up and said what we thought that all transport authorities and bus operators will be bound to provide concessionary fare schemes, especially for the disabled. The fact that it will be for authorities to opt out rather than in is of great importance in terms of the money available as a result of this measure.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich referred to transport problems in rural areas. As a result of the Bill, villages such as the one in which I live in my constituency which have only two buses a week will be able to have a much more flexible transport system to take people into the local market town to do their shopping and other business. Contrary to Opposition scaremongering, the taxi provisions and the extension of licensing provisions to allow minibuses and other rural transport to flourish will be welcomed by people in the rural areas when they appreciate what the long-term effects of the Bill will be.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford upon Avon): My hon. Friend was speaking of his experience in the rural areas of Lancashire. I can confirm from my experiences in Warwickshire that there are enterprises preparing to offer new public transport services in rural areas which previously had highly unsatisfactory services. I anticipate that we shall see the fruits of this legislation quickly, and that they will parallel the excellent consequences of the deregulation of the sale of spectacles. Such deregulation has resulted in enterprises offering a new, improved range of services. Evidence suggests that exactly the same will happen with regard to transport.

Mr. Hind: It has been suggested that this money resolution is a patching-up operation, due to the lack of consultation. The representations of some Labour-controlled local authorities with transport responsibilities were notable for their absence. The Lancashire county council, if I may use a cricketing expression, took their bats home and refused to have anything to do with the Committee.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: It was notable that, when I was called upon in Committee to make what I thought were sensible speeches on behalf of those I represent in Lancashire, I had to rely upon transport planners from authorities other than those of Lancashire because they refused to take part in the debate.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Hind: No.

It must be borne in mind that the lack of consultation has been used as an excuse by many Labour-controlled authorities to stall and do nothing on this Bill. If the result is chaos, the public can ask those authorities why that is so. The answer is that, right the way through, they have refused to do anything.

Mr. Rogers: Perhaps I may correct the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hind: I do not need to be corrected.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one hon. Member may be on his feet at one time. If the hon. Member is patient he may be called.

Mr. Hind: I do not wish to appear uncharitable, Mr. Speaker. I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Rogers: I thank the hon. Gentleman and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for subtly making the hon. Gentleman give way. The hon. Gentleman said that there was no pressure from the Lancashire area in connection with this Bill. Does he not remember that one of the leaders of the opposition to this Bill was my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) who, very forcibly on occasions, put forward the views of the Lancashire county council and the

[Mr. Rogers]

local authorities in that area? I would like to remind the hon. Gentleman that he was not present on one occasion to support his own amendment.

Mr. Hind: I accept that the amendment was eventually withdrawn. However, the Front Bench spokesman to whom the hon. Gentleman refers represents Wigan and the views of Greater Manchester, not Lancashire.

In terms of advice, support and pressure, Lancashire county was deliberately absent and chose to take no part in the proceedings. I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about Greater Manchester but my statement on Lancashire is true and I will not resile from it.

Mr. Speaker: If I may say to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), I do not get hon. Members to give way. It is up to them.

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it genuine?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Yes. It seems that the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) is misrepresenting a Lancashire Member who sat on the Committee for many hours and gave clear voice to all of the views of Lancashire people which, frankly, cannot be said of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West.

Mr. Speaker: I was not on the Committee, so I do not know that.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Lady deliberately misconstrues what I said. I said that the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council deliberately chose to take no part.

Mrs. Dunwoody: That is not true.

Mr. Hind: That council might have written to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), but it chose not to write to Conservative Members on the Committee who represent the Lancashire community. My constituency is called Lancashire, West—it could not be more clear which part of the county I represent.

Mr. Rogers: The Irish sea. That is west Lancashire.

Mr. Hind: Opposition Members may complain, but if the Bill is a mess, as the hon. Lady has said, it will be as a result of the failure of Labour-controlled local authorities to work for its implementation.

9.30 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Labour Members have said that the Bill was ill thought out. I have had conversations with several Members of another place who were amazed at the number of amendments that they were expected to vote through almost on the nod after the Bill had received such an exhaustive Committee stage here. Although I accept that the Government might feel that some clauses were not reached because of controversy on earlier clauses, it is nevertheless clear that many amendments were introduced late.

No Opposition Member would vote against the proposed rather niggardly provision, but it appears from what I have read this week that the Government might have been better advised to have written in some underwriting of a pension provision for members of the National Bus Company who are understandably worried about their pensions after privatisation. Employees of the Scottish Bus Group are not going on strike in support of colleagues in England and Wales because the Scottish Bus Group is not to be privatised. Employees there feel that their pensions are better safeguarded. I hope that they are right.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) complained of discrimination as between London and the rest of the country, but there is a further discrimination—of which we do not complain as yet—between England and Wales and Scotland. Presumably because of pressure from the Scottish Office, the Scottish Bus Group is to be retained as a public corporation, and that will give continuity for pension rights. That merely illustrates the illogicality of the Government's thinking in introducing the Bill.

There has been pressure from employers, unions and everyone else associated with the Bill for a properly underwritten guarantee of pension rights. It is regrettable that the Secretary of State has failed to write such provision into the money resolution. He is launching a bout of chaos on the country. There will be uncertainty for employees and an unpredictable service for bus users, all on the back of limited and somewhat contradictory experiments.

The Secretary of State has a nerve to return to the House so late and claim that the Bill was well prepared—it clearly was not—and that the resolution is anything like a definitive response to the criticisms of the gaps in the Bill and its financial provisions made here, in Committee, and in another place. So far, the Government have not responded to the protests. The workers look forward only to uncertainty and passengers can look forward only to worrying whether rather than when a bus will come along.

9.34 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhonnda): I have been prodded into speaking by what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said, especially as he extolled the Bill's virtues. Anybody who sat through the Committee stage will realise that this Bill has been cobbled together. The Secretary of State and his junior Minister, who took us through most of the time as the Secretary of State was absent, did not know what it was all about and on most occasions they had to rely quite heavily on civil servants to explain to them the meaning of some clauses.

One of the aspects of legislation which I should have thought any Government drafting legislation would consider was whether they could judge the effect their legislation would have in six months or a year. I challenge the Secretary of State to tell the House now or tomorrow what the state of transport will be in six months or a year. It was quite obvious in Committee that they were not able to forecast the state of transport. It is the lack of scientific analysis and logical progression in putting forward this Bill that disturbs me.

I do not know why the hon. Member for Lancashire, West is so happy. The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), the junior Minister who took the Bill through Committee, was not happy and his arguments were not based on a proper analysis of the problem. The Government set up trial areas and made some money available for certain experiments to be carried out, and yet we had the ridiculous situation of the Minister of State, Department of Transport saying to the Committee, "Oh, yes, we are basing our views on

experiments that were carried out in Hereford and I have first hand experience of those. I went there myself and asked people".

Mr. Speaker: May I direct the hon. Member's attention to the money resolution? He is going a little wide of that.

Mr. Rogers: I am not going particularly wide, Mr. Speaker, because I am saying that the Government are now asking for money, but during the preparatory stages of this Bill they did not ask for money to carry out properly funded experiments on the future of British transport. We ended up with the ridiculous situation of the Minister of State perambulating around Hereford chatting up people to find out what they thought of the experiments. Anyone who reads the reports of the proceedings in Committee will see the ill-founded bases of the Bill. The money that is being put forward to cover some of the difficulties that the Bill will bring about in our transport system will not be sufficient to cover the lack of awareness and lack of preparedness of the Government in reorganising the transport system.

9.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) was not quite sure of her attitude to the money resolution and the amendments that relate to it, which will be taken tomorrow. At one moment she described them as massive changes and a little later she said they were tiny changes. She will have to make up her mind before tomorrow whether she regards the amendments as massive changes or tiny changes. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady made a mountain out of a molehill, because the two measures concerned with the money resolution are minor and I will reply to the debate on the two limited points within the resolution.

Ever mindful of the admonition which you, Mr. Speaker, gave to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), I should not like to stray into the tempting country which the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) strayed into when he talked about dial-a-ride and concessionary fares and the Tyne and Wear metro, or into the matter mentioned by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who talked about pensions and wondered whether the Scottish Bus Group should be denationalised. Those are matters which can quite properly be raised tomorrow. I will confine myself to the limited resolution before the House.

The first point concerns deputy traffic commissioners. Instead of having three traffic commissioners as has been the case for route service licensing, we are now to have one traffic commissioner. The practice with heavy goods vehicles has been to have one deputy traffic commissioner who will stand in for the commissioner if he is sick or on holiday or if the pressure of work is too great. Throughout the Bill's proceedings, the same practice was suggested for the traffic commissioners in the context of buses. The deputy chairmen are not employed on full-time salaried posts but are paid fees for the cases they take.

I freely admit that there was a drafting mistake, in that the Bill and the original money resolution allowed for salaries to be paid to the traffic commissioner and those he employs, but they did not permit fees to be claimed by the deputy traffic commissioners. This was an oversight, and had the Standing Committee been doing its job properly instead of wasting 44 hours on clause 1 it might have picked up the odd point such as that. However, if that was the worst mistake we made, that is not too bad.

The disabled persons transport advisory committee was established in response to our debates on the interests of the disabled. Lady Lane-Fox moved an amendment in another place to make the existing non-statutory committee a statutory one. That non-statutory committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, advised her and me on all matters associated with transport for the disabled. The amendment was welcomed in another place, and, from what the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich has said, it seems that this House will welcome the change.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich complained that the disabled persons transport advisory committee would have no powers to insist on this, that or the other being done, but the purpose of advisory committees is to give advice, not to have powers to insist on things being done. This committee has existed for a long time and has met with considerable success in improving public transport for the disabled.

This change, which is generally welcome both in this House and in another place, requires that the statutory committee should be rewarded only by means of expenses, but there is no power in the Bill to pay the expenses of the members of that committee. That power is not in the Bill because the committee was not statutory when the legislation was first published and went through Committee. If hon. Members wish to have a change of this sort made, they must accept the fact that an extra money resolution is needed.

Those are the two small points dealt with in this money resolution, which I commend to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure of the Secretary of State—

(a) in respect of remuneration and allowances paid to deputy traffic commissioners;

(d) (b) resulting from the establishment of a Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

Farming (Northern Ireland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

9.43 pm

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): I welcome this opportunity to bring before the House the serious plight that has faced Northern Ireland agriculture during the summer as a result of adverse weather conditions. This summer has certainly been the worst in living memory. Indeed, many of the most elderly among the farming community cannot remember a worse situation facing the farmers in that part of the United Kingdom.

From June to mid-October there has been no dry spell, not even for two consecutive days throughout that time. A major cause of the problem lies in the fact that there was continuous rain day and night which, on occasions, culminated in flooding in various parts of the Province. Coupled with that, the temperature of the soil and of the air was about 2 deg. C lower than might have been expected in the summer. The continuous bad conditions caused all aspects of agriculture to suffer.

I want to outline, but not exaggerate, some of the difficulties. The prolonged periods of wet weather have wreaked havoc on the cereal and potato crops. Cereal farmers responded to the calls of Ministers who came to grain trade dinners and told them that, because of the cuts in dairy quotas, they should increase grain production. Although in Europe as a whole grain was in surplus, Northern Ireland was a deficit area. Northern Ireland is a net importer of grain. Farmers were encouraged to expand cereal production, and as a consequence many of them face ruin. Grain producers are professionals in their own right and they know how to grow cereals. They are important and must be kept in business if cereal production in Northern Ireland is to have any future.

Most of the winter wheat has been lost, as is acknowledged even by the figures of the Department of Agriculture. The winter barley has also suffered seriously. There were extra spraying costs and high drying costs. After difficult harvesting conditions, there is a poor yield. Spring barley has finally been salvaged, but again, with high drying costs and low yields, with only a limited amount of straw saved. The result is poor profits for those who depend on grain growing for their livelihood. Harvesting was most difficult, protracted and expensive.

Successive Secretaries of State and Ministers of Agriculture have encouraged the growth of alternative crops. Farmers were told not to put all their eggs in one basket. They were encouraged to produce oil seed rape —disaster. They were told to grow peas—disaster. Flax production this year has been a disaster. There is a catalogue of crop failures. So much for alternative crops in Northern Ireland.

In fairness, potato growers struggled valiantly against great odds to try to harvest their crops. Ground conditions were atrocious. Some potatoes lay under 12 to 18 inches of water for a long time. Eventually some farmers got the potatoes home. But what did they find? The potatoes looked good when they were brought from the field, but within three weeks they began to rot in their boxes. Part of the problem was caused by the weather. Blight was rampant. Even continuous spraying had no effect. In some cases, before the farmers were out of the fields, the rain had started and the day's work was washed into the ground.

A problem that I found out about only a short time ago —water slade—occurs when potatoes consume so much water that they cannot absorb any more and cannot stand against germs. When potatoes are brought to the farm, they are so weakened that germs attack them and soon the potatoes are a rotting mess.

I recently visited Rathfriland in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) where I met a farmer who had been working all year to produce 250 tonnes of potatoes. They were the sole source of his livelihood. He stood on top of those potatoes and sank into them. They were a rotting mess.

Everyone has great sympathy for the farmers, but sympathy is not enough. The farmers in South Down said that £2·5 million or £3 million was available under a stockfeed scheme, and they asked why the money could not be given to those who had ended up putting their potatoes on dumps or in bogs. They got no return for the capital invested and the work put into producing those potatoes over a whole year.

We face a difficult and serious problem. I do not denigrate officials in the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland who have given farmers advice, but that advice has not helped. One farmer spent £30,000 on new boxes and a forklift truck to handle them. His potatoes rotted. Another farmer bought drying equipment and did everything right—even the departmental officials agreed that he did everything right—but his potatoes rotted as well.

We are speaking of farmers' livelihoods, and we must have every sympathy for them. I ask Ministers to help men who have lost their whole production of the past year.

My constituency is known as the orchard of Ireland, but the apple producers have had difficult times because of the weather. Apple scab has been a difficult problem for the apple growers. Even though they used extra spraying, they faced similar problems to those experienced by the potato growers. Before the farmers got through the orchard gate, the day's work was lost. Up to 40 per cent. of the apple crop is virtually unmarketable this year. This is a high-cost industry, and the growers face grave difficulties.

One would not expect mushrooms to have been affected by the weather, but mushroom growers require straw, the raw material for mushroom production. Growers in my constituency employ 1,000 people—the industry is an important source of employment in my constituency. Like the apple producers, they have a large marketing organisation. I implore Ministers to ensure that both those sectors receive help. Jobs are at stake and markets that have been fought for and won over many years may be lost. Consideration should be given to bringing in straw for the mushroom growers from outside Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The majority of farmers in Northern Ireland are dependent on the grass-based sector for their living. There has been much discussion about dairy farmers recently, but in a different vein. Today the problem is not quotas, but insufficient fodder to carry the dairy cows through the winter. Many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland have had their cows inside since the middle of August. As much silage has alredy been consumed as would normally have

been consumed by mid or late January. I understand that by mid-February or March they will be unable to feed the animals with the silage that they have managed to salvage.

During the past two weeks better weather in Northern Ireland, has partly helped to relieve the problem. Farmers have not sat on their thumbs waiting for help. They have done their best in those two weeks to try to salvage what little they can. However, that is not enough. There is an estimated shortfall in forage of up to 40 per cent. That problem must be dealt with in the coming months.

Beef producers have also had a serious time during the past four or five months. The grass did not have the feeding value required to help cattle to thrive, and the prices offered by the plants were much lower than last year. It was very much a buyer's market. One would have thought that the period of intervention would have eased the problem. When farmers tried to sell their cattle during the short period of intervention they rang up the local plants but were told that nothing was required. They did not require anything because more than 50 per cent. of the plants in Ireland are owned by factories originating in the Republic of Ireland. They brought thousands of cattle over the border and killed them in the plants in Northern Ireland.

If intervention is to work and provide support for the farmer, the farmer must be seen to be receiving that support. An intervention period must ensure a domiciliary period for cattle coming from the Republic of Ireland. Cattle should be kept on grass in Northern Ireland for a month, six weeks or even two months before they can be slaughtered. The Government should address themselves to the problem, because during that period farmers did not receive the benefit of intervention. The benefit went to the plant and the buyers who went to the Republic of Ireland, bought the cattle, and brought them north. They, not the farmers received the profit. At least 50 per cent. of the plants did not indulge in that practice, and I congratulate them on sticking by the people who supported them through thick and thin over the years. Those plants stuck with the farmers who had referred cattle to them in the past. However, the other plants should be condemned for bringing cattle from the Republic of Ireland. No doubt it was more profitable for them.

According to Department of Agriculture figures, in the less-favoured areas only 20 per cent. of the hay was saved, whereas in lowland areas 30 per cent. was saved——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.— [*Mr. Neubert.*]

Mr. Nicholson: I assume that there is no argument with those figures, which show how serious the fodder problem is.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I do not doubt the accuracy of the figures quoted by my hon. Friend. However, even in the south of County Antrim, which is reckoned to be good agricultural land, many farms have no hay at all. Not even one bale has been saved.

Mr. Nicholson: I thank my right hon. Friend for that intervention. What he says is correct. In the county of Fermanagh, which has a higher rainfall than any other part of the United Kingdom, the farmers are used to such conditions and can say, "We have faced this before." However, this time the problem has spread throughout Northern Ireland. No area has been left untouched by it.

Many small farmers, especially in hill areas, depend completely on hay as fodder for their animals during the winter. They are in an impossible position. Many of them have no hay, and find it too expensive to purchase hay or silage. The most serious problems will arise during January, February and March next year, when no fodder will exist. Indeed, much of the silage and hay that has been saved is of such poor quality that farmers will need to augment its protein value with grain.

I have always been a keen supporter of intervention grain being brought to Northern Ireland, and I welcome the announcement to bring it there now. However, intervention grain will not solve the problem. I am worried about how that grain will be distributed, and I wish to be assured that it will reach those in the greatest need. I am worried that, at the end of the day, all that we shall have achieved will be to give the merchants a rich harvest at the expense of those who need grain. I want assurances that the grain will not go into silos in Belfast and never be seen again. I want assurance that the grain will be given to small hill farmers and to farmers most in need.

I am glad to see the new Secretary of State on the Front Bench tonight. He has shown great interest in the matter since it first came to his attention. When we visited the former Secretary of State, he told us that he would have discussions with the millers about producing a low-cost ration to be sold to farmers, but to date we have heard nothing of that. Are those negotiations continuing, or have the millers refused to co-operate?

I have spent much time talking about the difficulties of farmers, However, because Northern Ireland depends so much on agriculture, its problems affect many others. It affects the ancillary industries. For example, creamery workers are being let off work, and in other sectors of agriculture people are losing their jobs. When farmers do not have that little extra to spend, local shops suffer. Lime distributors, who last year told me that they could not manufacture and distribute lime fast enough, have not sold a ton this year, and they have no work.

The Government's initial response to the problem was extremely slow and left much to be desired. They may have hoped that the position would improve and that the problem would disappear. At the end of June many farmers told me that July would be better, and then that August and September would be better, and perhaps Ministers and officials thought the same. But the problem has not disappeared. It will not be good enough for them to say today that they will not know how bad the position is until the end of 1985. Farmers require today an early sign of what the Government propose to do to relieve the present crisis.

At present little winter grain has been planted. The Government should seriously consider an acreage payment to cereal and potato producers to get them back in business because many of them cannot afford to replant next year. That way those people can continue to produce and to do what they do best. There should be additional payments of the hill land compensatory amounts for the current year. Early payments of suckler cow and ewe premiums should be made, and a suspension of the six months' retention rule for suckler cow payments should be invoked. That way the Minister will at least put money into the hands of those

[Mr. Nicholson]

who require it most — those who must buy the dear fodder and dear meal. There will be no cheap grain or meal.

There is a serious shortage of hay in Northern Ireland. The Government should consider making a transport subsidy to bring hay by sea to Northern Ireland to help us over the present problem. Small dairy farmers who need to buy fodder also require extra aid. Hon. Members must remember that 20 per cent. of dairy farmers depend on hay, and that not all have switched to silage. The co-responsibility levy should be abolished. That would assist all dairy farmers and would not cost the Government any extra money because the legislation has outlived its useful purpose. The Government should announce immediately the extension of the former agricultural and horticultural grants scheme to enable work to be finished because farmers have been unable even to reach their land to carry out work. As many pastures have been seriously damaged and need to be renewed, a new and higher grant rate should be introduced for a short time to ensure that the pasture is renewed and extra reseeding carried out.

I know that the Government are monitoring the position effectively, and I wish them well. I hope that they will make early recommendations on those proposals.

I suggest that a subsidised intervention is required for the apple growers in my constituency for the pulping of apples. The pulped apples should be made available to livestock farmers at an attractive price.

I have suggested some ways in which the Government could assist hard-pressed farmers. I have thrown out ideas merely as suggestions and I appreciate that other approaches could be adopted. However, I feel that some of my suggestions are worthy of urgent and immediate action.

Farmers cannot look forward to the future with any confidence, especially this coming winter. The time for talking has passed and it is now time for positive action. The Government have dragged their feet long enough. Farmers are proud and hard-working people. They do not want handouts, the dole or supplementary benefit. They want to work for a proper return on their input. I implore the Government to give them the encouragement that they require if they are to continue in business.

10.11 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It is an occasion resonant with historical echoes when hon. Members from Northern Ireland come to tell the Government and the House about the potatoes that have rotted in the clamps. Now in 1985, unlike 1845, we have no difficulties in persuading Ministers of reality and the seriousness of what we are telling them. It is not usual for Adjournment debates to be attended by the Minister of State and the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman's presence will be marked and appreciated as a sign of his personal interest in the circumstances that have been described so vividly by my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson).

I shall take only a short time to underline one item in the long a la carte menu which my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh displayed and from which Ministers will have to select a policy that is consistent with their other obligations and with more general considerations, but whereby they may be seen to be, in the words of my hon. Friend, bringing help now to where it is needed most.

My hon. Friend referred to intervention grain. Despite what has happened in Northern Ireland and some other places, opinion seems to be agreed that the coming year will be an even more bumper year for intervention. Hitherto, the economics of utilising storage in Northern Ireland for intervention grain have not been regarded by the Department of Agriculture as favourable. Even in the coming year there may be a balance which tips slightly on the calculations against utilisation of storage in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the utilisation of Northern Ireland storage could be at least one method whereby assistance could be given within the framework of existing arrangements to those farmers in Northern Ireland who are most in need of it. We shall be faced with massive intervention in the coming months. Let us use what is an evil offspin of the common agricultural policy in a manner that is helpful to one part of the United Kingdom.

10.14 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I join the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) and the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) in their plea for assistance for agriculture in Northern Ireland. I add my plea for Scotland. Every inch of rain that fell in Northern Ireland fell with added ferocity in Scotland. If the atrocious conditions needed any elaboration, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) would give it. July, August and September were the worse months for agriculture generally that anyone in the north can remember. This has resulted in shorter supplies of hay which is of poor quality and a poor harvest of grain which is of low quality and quantity. The same goes for all other classifications of fodder.

There is sometimes no fodder in the less-favoured hill areas. That is why it is important that we should know as soon as possible the form of Government assistance that will be made available. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has said that assistance will be forthcoming, but the sooner we know what it is the better. It may come through the hill livestock compensatory amounts, the suckler cow grant system and the ewe premium. I appreciate that that does not help the dairy farmer who is in dire straits, with poor quality silage in small quantities. We may have to consider a form of headage payment for dairy cattle and an extension of the co-responsibility levy.

Every section has been hard hit, including horticulture. The only crop that seems to have done well is turnips. We must not underestimate the damage that has been done to grassland and undersown crops. The difficulty of operating combine harvesters and balers in the soft ground have serious long-term implications. I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that the conditions are as serious as hon. Members have said. I know that he has seen for himself what happened in Northern Ireland. These conditions have been duplicated in Scotland and northern England. I hope that my hon. Friend has some good news. The sooner we can plan ahead for the difficult winter, the better.

10.17 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) has put on record the serious consequences for farming in Northern Ireland of the terrible weather during the summer months. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred to Scotland. I have been in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh and can bear out what was said by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). Fields of hay were not gathered in. I have seen farms on my way to Newcastle and there is no doubt that this year there has been widespread destruction of the hay crop. Other areas in Northern Ireland have been similarly hard hit.

Farming in Northern Ireland is difficult enough in normal circumstances with high rainfall and a short growing season, but the continuous and exceptionally wet, dull and unsettled weather this year has hit farming extremely hard. The longer-term implications have not yet been fully evaluated, but the repercussions for many sectors of production will be serious throughout the coming winter and into 1986. I have no magic formula to solve this problem. During the past few months the weather has improved. As the old song says, spring is a little late this year. Summer this year came a little late so it has not been warm enough to dry out the ground.

I shall add to the facts given by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh and put the situation into clear perspective by telling the House that the summer of 1985 in Northern Ireland was the wettest for 25 years and in some areas of the Province the wettest for a century. There was measurable rain practically every day from mid-June to late September. I was in the area at that time and I know that it was perhaps the wettest 40 days for a long time. Rain fell almost every day. Rainfall during July was 27 per cent. to 70 per cent. above average, during August 63 per cent. to 169 per cent. above average, and during September 21 per cent. to 117 per cent. above average. During three separate periods in September, rainfall figures were so high that we would normally expect them to occur only once in 600 years. Speaking almost in competition, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries said that the rain fell harder in Scotland. It certainly fell harder than some of us saw in Northern Ireland. There were numerous violent thunderstorms, with substantial flooding in many areas, and no sustained dry spells.

In August I went to a farm not far from Belfast where one had to be wearing gumboots before walking on what was normally a hayfield. The strongest wind and the warmest climate were the only things that could have dried out the field before the autumn cold set in. Sunshine was around 25 per cent. below average for most of the summer and average temperatures were one degree below normal in July and September and two degrees below normal in August. I recognise that the extreme bad weather also happened in Scotland, as we have heard tonight. Bad weather also occurred in parts of Wales and northern England, in my own area of the Pennines. Rainfall in central and west Scotland was generally two to two and a half times the normal. Sunshine was 25 per cent. less than average over most of Scotland and temperatures were generally below average. Northern England and the Pennines suffered similar weather to that experienced in Scotland—twice the usual amount of rain, 25 per cent. less than average sunshine and temperatures around one to two degrees lower than average.

It has to be borne in mind that there is one particular issue that we would be remiss to forget in respect of Northern Ireland. Agriculture represents a much more significant part of the economy in Northern Ireland than for the United Kingdom as a whole, so the impact of the adverse weather and the relative scale of losses and disadvantage are bound to be greater than elsewhere. The extreme livestock orientation of farming in Northern Ireland also leaves the industry more vulnerable to abnormal weather or other major influences on production.

As was said by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, the hardest hit sector is undoubtedly cattle production because of the losses of hay and silage, particularly on the small farms in the less-favoured areas which account for most of the cattle produced in Northern Ireland. The Department of Agriculture estimates that fodder production will be some 700,000 tonnes of hay equivalent below requirement, which in a normal year is 0·5 million tonnes of hay plus 5·8 million tonnes of silage. To compensate for that would require an extra 300 to 400,000 tonnes of compound feed. In that connection, I commend the initiative taken by the industry whereby the Ulster Farmers Union and certain agricultural co-operatives are trying to arrange a consignment of hay from Canada.

With regard to arable crops, the bulk of the winter wheat and a considerable proportion of winter barley, peas and flax have been lost. It was a great tragedy about flax. One thousand acres were put down to flax this year and 500 acres were put down the previous year. The whole question is linked to the revival of the linen industry in Northern Ireland. There is a shortage of flax in the world, and one cannot have a linen industry without the raw material. In Europe there is talk of butter mountains and meat mountains. We did not have a flax mountain in Northern Ireland because we had the worst possible weather at that time.

The moisture content of all grain is high. Northern Ireland depends very much on imported cereals and some farmers have been attempting to expand arable cropping to diversify out of milk because of milk quota problems, so that this year's weather has been an unfortunate setback, following the two good cereal harvests in 1983 and 1984. There are reduced yields and higher rates of disease in potato production and much of that has rotted underground or rotted when collected.

Harvesting is well under way at present, although 10 per cent. of the crop may not be worth lifting. It is expected that the inelastic demand for potatoes will mean that reduced supplies of ware potatoes are likely to be compensated by higher prices later in the year. The impact of disease losses during storage cannot yet be assessed. There may be losses in certain varieties of early seed potatoes. That again is unfortunate because Northern Ireland has a valuable export trade in seed potatoes and prices are determined by world markets rather than the quantity of local supply. The cutback will not be compensated by higher prices for what has been harvested.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh also referred to the small apple crop, which is probably unsaleable in many places. There is also a shortage of the straw that is required for mushrooms.

[Dr. Rhodes Boyson]

We cannot say exactly what the position is, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is with us this evening, and my noble Friend in the other place, who takes responsibility for agriculture, share the concern about the enormous difficulties affecting farmers. Along with other Agriculture Ministers, they will be taking measures to alleviate the losses and disadvantages. The Government cannot, of course, be expected to compensate farmers for what must be recognised as the ups and downs of farming and the fact that every year the size of the crop is different. Problems are normally created by the weather from year to year. However, we recognise that the scale of the problems that have hit Northern Ireland this year is such that it threatens the fabric of this most important and essential industry. The matter is being considered. Everything that has been said in the debate will be checked by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend.

Last week there was a debate on the matter in the Northern Ireland Assembly, in which the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh spoke. He spoke for 27 minutes tonight and 17 minutes last week. I listed 11 matters that we shall have to examine. The hon. Gentleman expanded on eight tonight.

The position of growers who have suffered heavy crop losses is being considered. Quantitative assessment of abnormal losses by individuals is particularly difficult. Normal market forces should in some sectors compensate for shortages in supply. Certain sectors benefited from exceptionally good harvests in 1983 and 1984. Much work must be done to justify the use of public funds to compensate fairly farmers who have been careful in what they have built up over the years compared to others who have not preserved crops as they were asked to by the Department some years ago.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh referred to intervention grain. A transfer to Northern Ireland of 40,000 tonnes of wheat from intervention stores for use as animal feed is proposed. The grain is being made available at 25 per cent. discount and will be transported to Northern Ireland at EC expense. The EC will insist that that grain goes to the people who require it. I am not putting one part of the community against the other. The hon. Gentleman referred to millers in his speech last week. Our Department in Northern Ireland will insist that the grain goes to the people who need it. The EC will also make sure that that happens. I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance about that.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned fat cattle coming from the Irish Republic. He said that 50 per cent. of meat plants in the north are Republican-owned. I appreciate the points that he makes, which farmers in his area must have raised with him. However, the EC regulations make it clear that there must be a free trade in live animals and beef. Market forces thus apply, sometimes to the advantage, sometimes to the disadvantage, of Northern Ireland. Imports of fat cattle from the Republic during the first nine months of this year were 71,000 compared with 58,500 during the same period in 1984. Therefore, the increase is by no means excessive.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have listened carefully to what has been said about Northern Ireland, as well as about Scotland. A careful debate took place in the Assembly, which was followed by Ministers with responsibility for agriculture in Northern Ireland and the rest of us who take an intense interest in agriculture. I reassure the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, the right hon. Member for South Down and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries that there will be full recognition of all that has been said. In the Department we shall consider the matter to see what can be done, knowing that these are exceptional circumstances and that, whatever happens, we must maintain the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Question having been proposed at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 29 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CLWYD COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (PORT OF AYR) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *[Lords]*

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TRUST (AMENDMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL. *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
No day named for Second Reading

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Evans** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over 12 months: and what was the figure in May 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): On 11 July, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,327,000, 41 per cent. of the total. The corresponding number of unemployed registrants in April 1979 was 367,000.

Mr. Evans: Does the Minister accept that long-term unemployment is now the greatest problem facing our society—a problem that was scarcely noticeable under the Labour Government, but is major under the Tory Government? How does the hon. Gentleman think the two Cabinet Ministers will solve the problem when one Secretary of State for Employment could not?

Mr. Clark: The House will agree with the hon. Gentleman's assessment of long-term unemployment, which carries with it a sense of rejection and degradation and is a source of great concern to us all. It is for this reason that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has set in train a number of initiatives devised specifically to bring the long-term unemployment back into the purlieu of the employment service, to make known to them all the facilities that are available and to make fresh contact with them, whether by post or by inviting them into jobcentres. I hope that the increasing economic activity will help bring this intractable problem towards a solution.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. Friend agree that one among the many reasons for the level of unemployment is the demographic changes taking place, and that the number of people seeking employment has gone up dramatically over the past few years, which did not happen 10 years ago? Does the he agree further that in the years to come those demographic changes will alter today's position and that to ignore this factor is to ignore one of the reasons for the present level of unemployment?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right. It is true that the number of jobs continues to go up and that we have increased it by 350,000. If the population of working age had stayed at the same levels, unemployment would now be in the 2 million range.

Mr. Hardy: What steps are the Government taking to monitor and respond to the situation in constituencies such as mine where jobs are being destroyed at a pace and to an extent that would not have been imaginable in 1979? Does the hon. Gentleman deny that in 12 months' time the position in such areas will be a great deal worse than it is today?

Mr. Clark: It is true, regrettably, that there are parts of the United Kingdom where the old technologies are obsolete and were new businesses have not yet been established. However, if the hon. Gentleman looks at the national picture he will see that the number of vacancies is higher than it has ever been during the last decade.

Mr. Wainwright: Is the Minister aware that the special measures that the Government have made available to the long-term unemployed are so modest as in no way to approach what is needed to solve the problem? Will he undertake that his right hon. and noble Friend will come to Parliament with a scheme which will provide every long-term unemployed person with the opportunity of renewed work or at least work experience?

Mr. Clark: The House knows that we are already spending £2 billion of taxpayers' money on special employment and training measures, but it is hard to believe that permanent and lasting jobs could be created from this source after the tap of taxpayers' money had been cut off, or after, as would be the case if there were a Labour Government, the Chancellor of the Exchequer came scuttling back from the International Monetary Fund with his marching orders. Real jobs can be created only by increasing business and enterprise activity.

Job Seekers

3. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied that all those classified as unemployed are actively seeking work.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): No, Sir. Latest estimates for 1984 show that nearly one third of those

included in the unemployment count were either not actively seeking work or had a paid job during the week of the survey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Has my hon. Friend seen the recent article by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)? Is it not scurrilous that he should attempt to "rubbish" statistics produced by an independent survey which were accurately and fairly presented by the Secretary of State for Employment in a an article in *The Times*?

Mr. Trippier: I think that "scurrilous" is the word. The survey to which my hon. Friend refers is the labour force survey, which was carried out in no fewer than 57,000 homes. It is regarded both in and out of Whitehall as a non-political, independent and widely-accepted source of statistical information. I find it interesting that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has used that survey to his advantage when referring to second jobs. The Labour party does not like good news. Last year Britain created more new jobs than the whole of Europe put together. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is particularly scornful of the estimated growth in the number of self-employed. The official estimate of an increase of 393,000 is based upon the same statistical inquiry, the labour force survey.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Minister aware that in any "snapshot" of the unemployed we see that people do not look for work in a particular week because they are realistic and know that work is not available? Does he realise that the annual survey found that 870,000 workers were seeking work but that they were not included in the figures because they were not entitled to benefits? I hope that he will not mock the unemployed by emulating Jeffrey Archer and suggesting that they are workshy and malingerers. That is not true. Does the Minister not realise that in six years of Conservative government unemployment has risen consistently every year? Is he not ashamed of that fact?

Mr. Trippier: It is not my intention, nor that of my colleagues, to mock the unemployed. However, we are sick to the back teeth of the Labour party's claim that it has a monopoly of compassion. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he has the answer and that there is an easy solution to this problem, will he explain to the House in some detail why unemployment rose so dramatically when the Labour Government were in office?

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency 4,600 people are registered as unemployed and that 82 per cent. of companies report difficulty over recruiting skilled labour, including companies in the engineering industry? At the skillcentre, 24 places are available on engineering courses, but the average occupancy rate is only eight, and the course is therefore to be curtailed. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient is being done to draw to the attention of the registered unemployed the fact that there are great opportunities to retrain for jobs, which are available in large numbers?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is correct. Vacancies notified to MSC jobcentres are only about one third of the true level. Employers are best placed to tackle the many possible causes of shortages by training and retraining. That is why we have adopted the adult training strategy which allows for national Government and local grants to help industry meet its skill requirements. We hope that employers in my hon. Friend's constituency and throughout the country will take advantage of that assistance.

Mr. Prescott: I add my congratulations to the Minister of State and the Paymaster General on their appointments, although I deplore the fact that the Secretary of State for Employment is in a non-elected place, from where he throws insults at the labour force by calling them work shy.

May I encourage the Paymaster General and the Secretary of State to set a precedent in their Department by giving us the real unemployment facts? Do they recognise that their labour force survey reveals that 870,000 people are available for work but not registered? That means that the official unemployment level is well over 4 million and between three and four times greater than that which the Conservative Government inherited in 1979.

Mr. Trippier: On behalf of myself and my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. He was kinder than he thinks because he promoted me to Minister of State. The hon. Gentleman is perhaps a little late in referring to the fact that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State is a non-elected Member, because Mr. Bickerstaff mentioned that at the Labour party conference. That was surprising, since he was elected for life by that famous British institution known as the block vote. The truth is that the statistical survey is accurate. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in that he referred only to the 870,000 people who are not claiming benefit but who are looking for and taking jobs. That point was made in the article that my right hon. and noble Friend wrote on 5 October. The hon. Gentleman must take into account the fact that 940,000 people are claiming benefit but not looking for work.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. Friend agree that one must look behind the statistics? Does he accept that the largest number of long-term unemployed are in the south-east, the area with the largest number of job vacancies? In the south-east, about 9,000 job vacancies have remained unfilled for two months or more, when 12 per cent. of CBI firms report that labour shortages are the reason for restricted output in the future. The MSC has identified 173 occupational areas with labour shortages. Is not one of the problems that unemployment benefit officers know who is unemployed but do not know where the jobs are, while the jobcentres know where the jobs are but do not know who is unemployed?

Mr. Trippier: We are well aware of the difficulties caused by the fewer job opportunities in the north compared with the south. That is one of the principal reasons for a regional policy. As a northern Member, I am well aware of the difficulties. It is important to stress the adult training strategy and the many pluses and achievements which have resulted from the youth training scheme. That scheme is without doubt a success and is recognised as such by those who take advantage of it.

Byssinosis

5. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Paymaster General how many claims have been made under the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers Compensation) Act 1979 for compensation for byssinosis sufferers in the last year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): In the 12 months to 30 September 1985 there were 66 claims.

Mr. Lamond: Is the Minister aware that that number would be increased considerably if he reconsidered the scheme and changed the rules? If he did that, many hundreds who deserve the compensation, including many in my constituency who are debarred from claiming the lump sum compensation because they once worked for a firm which is still in existence, would be given the chance to obtain it? Is he aware that traditionally in the textile industry people work for a number of firms?

Mr. Bottomley: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his persistence. We exchanged correspondence on this issue earlier in the year. The Act operates when the previous employer is still in business. It is important for people to make claims against previous employers who are still in business.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that it is all very well for him to give the number of applications, but that it would be interesting to know the number of rejections? Have not many applications been rejected, yet when the post mortems were carried out the applicants were found to be riddled with the disease? I want the Minister to investigate the problem and do something about it.

Mr. Bottomley: I anticipated the hon. Gentleman's point, and so can tell him that 2,534 cases have been approved and fewer than 500 rejected. More than £16 million has been paid to byssinosis sufferers since the Act came into force.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that there is a danger that some people might fall between two stools because they have worked for companies which have become defunct and companies which are still in existence, so that the buck is passed backwards and forwards?

Is the Minister aware that a group of people suffering from emphysema or chronic bronchitis may not obtain full recognition under the 1979 Act? Is there not a case for reviewing the Act to ensure that those people are treated fairly?

Mr. Bottomley: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for the part that he has played in the implementation of the Act. We intend to extend the range of the Act, but I cannot offer much progress on his other points.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently employed in the United Kingdom; and how many were in employment in May 1979.

12. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Paymaster General how many people were in employment in May 1979; and how many are in employment now.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): In June 1985 there were 24,245,000 people in employment in the United Kingdom. In June 1979 there were 25,375,000.

Mr. Litherland: Does the Minister agree that the figures are grim, and that if translated into inner city areas are horrific? Is he aware that 20,000 jobs have been lost in one area of my constituency in recent years, that there is 60 per cent. male unemployment, and that the last steel manufacturing mill closed only two weeks ago?

Does the Minister not think that it is the height of hypocrisy to give those people hope when it is the design and deliberate policy of the Government to create unemployment?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that the figures on employment have been quite encouraging since the spring of 1983. On the best objective estimates, 677,000 new jobs have been created in the British economy since then. Obviously, we must do everything possible to speed up the process of creating new jobs now that we have sustained growth in the economy.

I know that there is bad news in the inner cities, which is why the city action teams are concentrating on co-ordinating the vast amount of Government money being put into those areas. There is also good news in Manchester with the development of the exhibition centre at Manchester Central station, which will create a great deal of new, permanent employment in the city.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not true that in the main those in new employment since June 1983 are part-time workers? *[Interruption.]* I remind Conservative Members that they are the last people who should speak about part-time employment, because most of them are engaged in it. *[Interruption.]* There are about 300—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has as much right as anyone to speak.

Mr. Skinner: I do not need any lessons from the moonlighters on the Conservative Benches.

Is the Minister aware that the Northern Bus Company has stated during the past few days that, because of the Government's Transport Bill, 25 per cent. of its employees will be made redundant—either compulsorily or voluntarily? Are the Government concerned only with propping up the casino economy—banks that go into default and financial institutions? Have they not attacked the industrial base every week of every year that they have been in office?

Mr. Clarke: I notice that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has just taken his place. If he had been here sooner, instead of engaging in some part-time occupation, his earlier question could have been answered.

A substantial proportion of the new jobs being created are part time and self employed. That reflects the social change that has been taking place for many years, and which will continue to be reflected as we create employment in a modern economy.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not committed to social change. He prefers traditional industry with traditional organisation inside that industry. We are creating an economy in which more people will be employed in service industries, which is the pattern of other developed economies. I am sorry that that does not fit the hon. Gentleman's political preconceptions.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. and learned Friend remember a speech made in 1978 by a former Labour Minister, the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), in which he said that he could accurately predict the levels of unemployment as they are now, that they would be due entirely to demographic factors and that it

would be wrong for anyone to blame them on either a Labour or a Conservative Government? What has changed since then—the facts of the real world, or the fact that Labour Members no longer live in the real world?

Mr. Clarke: The Government have a duty to create the conditions in which more employment can be created, and I agree with my hon. Friend that it is wrong for Labour Members to change their view simply because they are in opposition. It is equally wrong for them to propose policies based on arbitrary figures plucked out of the air about the number of people who would be employed if they were in office and to promise glibly, as the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) does, a return to full employment, when he knows that many of the conditions required to achieve that are beyond the control of the Government.

Mr. Lester: Will my right hon. and learned Friend point out, amid the constant cries of bad news from the Opposition, the good news that Wrighton is developing its factory in Coventry and that International Harvester is reopening in Sheffield, an area of high unemployment? It is not all bad news.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend, who is right to point out that in the present economic situation one can select good and bad news. We have sustained growth in the economy, rising output, record-breaking investment and new employment being created. The task of everyone is to maintain that progress and speed up the development of new jobs.

Ms. Richardson: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that mainly women are being forced into part-time jobs which are badly paid and have bad conditions? for example, many of them lack holidays and other entitlements. Does he also agree, as he referred to training for full-time employment, that his Department would do well to change the rules back and allow married women to take part in the community programme?

Mr. Clarke: One reason why the increased rate of employment is not reducing the total of unemployed is that many more women are entering the labour market. It is a perfectly desirable consequence of social changes that they should be doing that, but it follows that many of them are actively looking for part-time work. They are jobs that people require and that are of value to the economy, so there is no point in dismissing part-time employment.

The answer to the hon. Lady's question about the community programme is that, in my view, it is right that the programme should concentrate on the needs of the long-term unemployed. The first aim of the community programme must be to make it easier for those people to get themselves back into the world of employment. Other aims must be subordinate to that.

Mr. Fallon: As the biggest single source of new employment is likely to be self employment, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider changing the rules to allow the status of self employment as of right rather than as a privilege surrendered by the Treasury?

Mr. Clarke: About one tenth of the work force is self employed, the highest figure for 60 years. From an examination of international examples and the experience of good advanced economies elsewhere, one can expect that proportion to increase. At the same time, we must not have abuse of the status of self employment for tax and insurance purposes. Having said that, it is good news that we have just reduced the national insurance contribution for the self employed, thus reducing a burden on them when they create their own businesses and provide employment for others.

Trade Unions (Political Funds)

8. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the numbers of unions that have now undertaken the balloting of their members on the political fund following recent legislation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: According to press reports, 19 trade unions have recently completed political fund review ballots.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Government be congratulating union members, including members of the Minister's union, the TGWU, on the way in which they voted—by such overwhelming majorities—to retain their political funds? Is the Minister aware that one of the many reasons why union members have voted in that way is the unfairness of the law in that companies which donate for political purposes do not need to have political ballots? When will the Government ensure that companies must have political funds and conduct ballots if they wish to contribute to the Tory party?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is one of those who have tried to explain during the passage of various pieces of legislation how difficult it would be for unions to have ballots. The ballot held by the Transport and General Workers Union has shown that instead of having about 30,000 members contracted out, 120,000 voted against the political levy. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman should join me in making it plain to others —the 100,000—how they and many others can contract out.

Mr. Rowe: Having sat through the proceedings on the Trade Union Bill in Committee, when the intention to ballot trade unions on the political levy was fought tooth and nail by the Opposition, does my hon. Friend share my astonishment that the Opposition should now be crowing over some kind if victory? The victory is for the arguments advanced by the Government, to the effect that trade union members should be given a proper chance to make their views clear.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. It is clear that if the ballots had taken place a year ago, the results may have been very different. It is clear also that if ballots are held again in nine or 10 years' time, the results may be different. If that were not so, there would be no reason for the Opposition to say that they will take away the right of union members to review every 10 years whether to have a political levy. If the Opposition were not frightened of trade union members, they would not want to alter the provisions that are set out in the Act.

Mr. Prescott: The Minister is always proudly proclaiming that he is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. As he believes that ballots provide a chance of giving trade union members the right to control their unions, will he tell us whether he participated in the ballot that was held by the TGWU, and give us his views?

Mr. Bottomley: My views are well known. I contributed to the political levy for years. As the

Government have made plain, if we want democratic elections we must allow people to decide for themselves which way they will vote.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: Did the hon. Gentleman vote?

Mr. Bottomley: I have given the same answer on all the ballot issues and I shall continue to maintain it, however much, and irrespective of the way in which people shout at union branch meetings. Secret ballots are designed to be just that.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General how many young people are currently unemployed.

Mr. Trippier: On 11 July 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed claimants aged under 18 years in the United Kingdom was 177,600.

Mr. Hamilton: Will the Minister concede that it is a diabolical scandal when such figures are presented to the House? Has he read the survey prepared by Marplan, which states categorically that three out of four of those interviewed took the view tht the Government do not care two hoots about unemployment and creating jobs for the unemployed? Is he aware that the survey reveals that many of those who are on the youth training scheme regard it a a cheap form of employment? Will he urge his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who, is, of course, a member of the Cabinet, to flex his muscles and get the Government's policy changed in order to get young people back to work as quickly as possible?

Mr. Trippier: It is disgraceful of the hon. Gentleman to say that the Government do not care two hoots about youth unemployment. That is a ridiculous assertion. Earlier in the year, with the publication of the White Paper on education and training, the Government stated they hoped that unemployment among young people under 18 years of age would become a thing of the past. The hon. Gentleman seeks to rubbish the YTS. He forgets that the scheme was put forward by the MSC, and that the TUC, which is an effective and strong member of the MSC, supports it. He tries to rubbish the YTS, but 84 per cent. of trainees are satisfied and find the scheme to be valuable. The hon. Gentleman should be rather more careful in what he says.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend will know that the chairman of the British Tourist Authority has said that if the Government are prepared to put up £5 million for the promotion of tourism, he believes that he can raise a further £10 million from private industry. That £15 million would generally generate £200 million worth of new business, which would be worth about 10,000 new jobs, many of which would go to young people. Would my hon. Friend be prepared to support such a scheme?

Mr. Trippier: I am aware that Mr. Duncan Bluck, the chairman of the British Tourist Authority, has said what my hon. Friend has attributed to him.. I have had the pleasure of meeting him, and in the near future I shall have the opportunity again of meeting him and members of his board. I shall examine what he says in great detail. I hope the House will welcome the fact that tourism is now the responsibility of the Department of Employment and that there is a clear recognition not only of the wealth creation, but the employment potential, of tourism.

Mr. Sheerman: Does the hon. Gentleman really care about unemployed young people? Will the Government use this occasion to dissociate themselves from the statement by Jeffrey Archer on the well-known radio programme "The World This Weekend", when he insulted all young people? Will the Government also dissociate themselves from the remarks of Lord Young, who said that there was no relationship between levels of 60 and 80 per cent. of black young people unemployment in our inner-city areas and recent urban disturbances? If the Government do not use this opportunity to do something, they are no more that a bunch of Pinocchios manipulated from somewhere else.

Mr. Trippier: Before the hon. Gentleman is carried away with his own rhetoric, let me assure him that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has gone to enormous lengths to show that the Government, and this Department in particular, are extremely concerned about the level of unemployment. We have said that time and again.

The hon. Gentleman referred to an interview of Jeffrey Archer on Radio 4. I heard that programme, and I have read the transcript. I assure the hon. Gentleman that he is distorting what was said by Mr. Archer. He actually said, "I am not saying there are not groups who are not genuinely in need."

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that in many places where there are jobs, as in my constituency, there is a shortage of housing? What can he do to help young people to find accommodation in a situation like that?

Mr. Trippier: It is part of the trading strategy to which I referred when answering an earlier question. We should encourage employers, wherever possible, either to bus people into work or to look favourably on housing.

Wages Councils

11. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General how many representations he has received about his announcement on the future of wages councils.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received 64 representations on the future of wages councils since my right hon. Friend's announcement on 17 July.

Mr. Dixon: Is it not a disgrace that, of the 94 nations which are signatories to the ILO convention, the United Kingdom should be the first nation to renounce it? Is it not criminal that the Government, at a time when they have accepted the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body which has awarded judges, admirals and generals massive pay increases of up to 47 per cent., should be attacking those at the bottom of the wages scale? To get those in high salaried positions to work harder the Government gave them massive salary increases, but those on low salaries are to have their wages cut in order to make them work harder.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. Our reason for proposing reform is that we think that this particularly Edwardian method of fixing wages is nowadays reducing the job prospects of many young people. For that reason, we are quite sure that a simplified

system will still give protection, where it is required, but will make it easier for young people to find jobs in the trades covered. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman, first, on remembering to be here, and, secondly, on remembering what his question was about.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in the main there is nothing wrong with wages councils? However, in one area, to which he has already referred, something must be done about their ability to fix young people's wages at too high a level. If my right hon. and learned Friend can deal with that, he can keep the wages councils and still provide more jobs for young people within the limits of the labour market and wages.

Mr. Clarke: As my right hon. Friend announced in July, that is broadly the Government's intention. It appears that wages councils have fixed the pay for younger workers at too high a level in relation to adult workers in the trades covered by the councils. Therefore, the councils are unintentionally reducing the number of jobs that could be offered to young people. We intend to act to do something about that.

Mr. Speaker: Ms. Clare Short.

Mr. Roger King: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Ms. Clare Short.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman admit, on the basis of the consultation on his document, that the overwhelming majority of people oppose the Government's policy of weakening and undermining the wages councils? What is his evidence for the Government's amazing suggestion that the only way in which jobs can be created is by cutting the wages of the poorest workers? Today the right hon. and learned Gentleman has suggested that young people who earn £40 or £50 a week are earning too much. Will he comment on the research commissioned by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers from the department of applied economics at Cambridge university, which demonstrates that the only bit of research evidence that the Government had to support their case was fabricated and ill-informed? That research was published this week, and we should like the Government to comment on it.

Mr. Clarke: Not for the first time economists at Cambridge university are disagreeing among themselves. A number of their studies have come to varying conclusions. A few moments ago I thought that there was agreement on both sides of the House that we should strive to increase employment and improve employment prospects. The moment the Government move to remove unnecessary regulations in the wages market and an outmoded method of fixing young workers' pay and to set out the details of all terms and conditions for workers in certain industries, the Opposition object and defend past practices. We are convinced that the changes we are making will increase job opportunities for many people in the industries affected.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the reason why 50 per cent. of young people in Germany go into apprenticeships and only 5 per cent. of young people in Britain do so is that in this country young people have been effectively priced out of jobs by trade unions, supported by wages councils wage rates?

Mr. Clarke: If we do not break the practices that are developing in some industries, whereby inexperienced school leavers move almost immediately to adult wage rates based on national negotiations, we shall merely ensure that youth unemployment is too high. It is for that reason that the Government are acting with respect to wages councils and other matters.

Youth Training Scheme (Managing Agencies)

13. **Mr. Park** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with Manpower Services Commission procedures for monitoring youth training scheme managing agencies.

Mr. Trippier: Yes, Sir. By the end of July this year nearly every current programme under the youth training scheme had been monitored.

Mr. Park: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in spite of that information, we continue to receive reports that many of the schemes are still used as a source of cheap labour and that the quality of the training is not up to the standards that we should expect to enable young people to move from a training scheme to a job?

Mr. Trippier: Seventy five per cent. of the schemes to which I referred in my substantive answer meet all the required standards of YTS. Those that do not—which fall down on relatively minor points—can be put right within the life of the programme. On several occasions the Opposition, not least the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) who talks about slave labour markets, have said that this is a cheap form of labour. The right hon. Gentleman wants in this country the sort of society that would breed that kind of slave labour. The money that is made available is an allowance. It is not meant to be a wage.

Mr. Bellingham: As my hon. Friend is anxious to encourage unemployed people to set up businesses on their own account, will he inform the House of the success of the enterprise allowance scheme? Why do the Opposition rubbish a good scheme and fail to recognise one when they see it?

Mr. Trippier: Whenever they can, the Opposition try to rubbish the enterprise allowance scheme. This scheme has been an enormous success. During the past two years 100,000 businesses have been set up under the scheme. Three out of four of those businesses have succeeded. The cost per job is £2,600, which compares favourably with similar schemes.

Employment Creation

14. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to assist small areas of particularly high unemployment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have recently set up city action teams to cover each inner city partnership area to co-ordinate and improve the impact of the very substantial Government assistance already available in these areas. We are reviewing the way in which Government resources might be better targeted to give the most effective assistance there and in other localities of particularly high unemployment.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that the artificial travel-to-work

areas hide pockets of huge unemployment — often unemployment of more than 50 per cent.? Will he at least extend to those small areas the meagre assistance that is given to assisted areas? The travel-to-work areas are hidden because of the way in which the system operates.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that the incidence of unemployment varies between travel-to-work areas. They are defined as travel-to-work areas because it is usually possible to move about in a city to find work. It is impossible to break cities down into little self-contained labour markets as a way of otherwise defining the figures. I agree that there are other areas outside the partnership areas where we need to examine particular problems. I do not agree that assistance in the partnership areas is meagre. It amounts to £670 million across all Government programmes.

Mr. Roger King: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would assist areas of very high unemployment, such as Erdington and Sparkbrook in Birmingham and elsewhere, if Labour local authorities did not make big rate increases like Birmingham's increase of 43 per cent.?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. One finds repeatedly that those who speak most vociferously locally about the lack of new employment going to their cities are councilors who are raising their rates and making their cities unattractive for any kind of new business, and small businesses in particular.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Colvin: In welcoming my right hon. Friend back from her travels, may I ask her to find time today to note that her demonstration of resolute leadership and statesmanship in Nassau and New York — [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading"]—not only gave the Conservative party a lead in the opinion polls, but made us favourites to win the next general election? Will she maintain that resolute leadership on the international scene to combat the killer drugs trade, which is one of the country's growing social evils?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he knows, I raise the vital problem of drugs in whatever international forum I attend, whether the United Nations, Nassau, or an economic summit or the European Council, because I am anxious to get as much co-operation as possible. It is necessary not only to take action in this country; but to try to stop the cultivation overseas of the plants which are used to make these drugs. We have recently given more money for that. We have also increased the numbers of Customs officers and the Metropolitan police. I find increasing consciousness in statesmen of all countries that we must together take action to defeat this menace.

Mr. Steel: As the Prime Minister is partially responsible for the security services, will she, in the light of the expensive fiasco of the Cyprus spy trial, reconsider her persistent refusal to countenance the setting up of a parliamentary supervisory committee on the security services? Is she aware that the United States Congress has such a committee? Why should we not have one? Will she consider it in the light of the report which Lord Hooson is preparing on the lessons to be learnt from the trial, of which I will send her a copy?

The Prime Minister: No. I believe that we have taken the right decision on the fundamental matter. The only problem that arises immediately for me, as distinct from those that will be dealt with in a statement later by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, is the Security Commission. I point out to the right hon. Gentleman that I decided in June 1984 that, given the gravity of the apparent breaches of security and the length of time the trial proceedings would be likely to take, it would be right to make an immediate reference to the Security Commission. The reference was not announced at the time, in order not in any way to prejudice the course of justice. In view of the acquittals, I will, of course, consult the chairman of the Security Commission and report to the House in due course.

Mr. Ewing: May I take the first opportunity that we have had in the House to congratulate the Prime Minister on becoming an old-age pensioner during the recess? Is she aware that if this had happened under a Labour Government and she had been entitled to claim benefit, she and Dennis would have got £9·50 a week more than they would get under this Government?

The Prime Minister: I note that under a Labour Government we would frequently have missed our Christmas bonus, which we would never have done under this Government.

Q2. **Mr. Warren** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Warren: I recognise that there has been rapid growth in business productivity and excellent growth in new businesses under my right hon. Friend's leadership —those facts are undeniable—but will my right hon. Friend, as a scientist, turn her attention to the future standards of science in our community? Is she aware that there is grave concern in the scientific community about the way in which we are losing our strength in the world of international science which is the seed corn of our future wealth?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend takes a great deal of interest in this subject, but I do not think that the problem is a lack of scientific work being done here. The problem is that we are not so good as our competitors at turning that work to technical advantage and industrial profit. I believe that we should concentrate on that aspect. On the question of pure science, I recently opened the new Spallation neutron source which is an excellent way of exploring the structure of matter, and which will be of great advantage to this country. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friend will concentrate his attention on how the results of our work can be turned into industrial profit and jobs.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: If a member of the right hon. Lady's Cabinet makes a speech criticising the policy of her Government, should he resign, or should he be sacked?

The Prime Minister: I think he would realise that he has a very tolerant Prime Minister.

Q3. **Mr. Ward** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who try to undermine the police have special blame from the rest of the community? Will she take this opportunity to confirm that she will make available to the police the men and equipment that may be needed to ensure that there will never be any no-go areas anywhere in the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is vital that there should not be any no-go areas in the United Kingdom, but for that purpose we need not only the numbers of police, properly equipped, but the full co-operation of the local citizenry and leaders of the community, because keeping law and order is the task of the whole country as well as of the police.

Mr. Wigley: In condemning international terrorism in all circumstances, will the Prime Minister take the opportunity to condemn the action of the French Government in relation to the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in New Zealand?

The Prime Minister: I think that the French Government have already made their apologies on that matter. We are doing all that we possibly can to assist New Zealand in finding the facts.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Prime Minister find time today to go to the South Bank to see the statue of Nelson Mandela erected by the GLC and unveiled yesterday by Oliver Tambo, president of the African National Congress of South Africa? While Mr. Tambo is in this country, will she seek to have talks with him to find out what is really going on in South Africa and explain to him why her Government are still the mainstay of the racist regime in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: The answers to the hon. Gentleman's questions in the order in which they were raised are, first, no, and, secondly, that I note that at a press conference in the House on 25 October Mr. Tambo said:

"We are going to step up the struggle. It is going to accelerate. The ANC embraces violence. We are going to intensify the struggle."

Then, in the TV-am programme on Sunday, he said:

"The ANC will go to every conceivable length to destroy the apartheid system in South Africa. The escalated armed struggle cannot avoid the use of guns."

Is that what the GLC supports?

Q4. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Walker: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the anxiety felt in this country about air safety. Can she confirm that the Government have every confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the accident investigations branch? Does she condemn the acts of a television company which is conducting the trial by television of a matter that is still under investigation—the fire disaster at Manchester airport?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that we can find out the causes of such a terrible accident in that way. I visited Manchester airport. It is a most impressive airport. One can only be impressed by the services which came to the aid of all the people on that aircraft during that terrible, tragic accident. I met the Chief Inspector of Accidents. I have every confidence in him and in the fact that he will conduct a full and wide-ranging investigation into that accident. Because of the complexities, the final report will take many months to produce. It is that investigation that will sort out the causes.

Mr. Kinnock: In the current Government discussions on public spending, the Foreign Secretary wants more for overseas aid, the Secretary of State for the Environment wants more for housing and the Secretary of State for Social Services wants more to maintain child benefit. Does the Prime Minister support them, or the Chancellor of the Exchequer in resisting them?

The Prime Minister: I support the taxpayer, out of whose pocket it all comes.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister realise that the overwhelming majority of taxpayers, who also have strong consciences, now have a Prime Minister who is prepared to watch the spread of starvation in the Third world, further decay of housing in our country and the further impoverishment of families? Does she think that, with her attitude, she truly leads a nation that is of good conscience?

The Prime Minister: All the expenditure that the right hon. Gentleman wishes to make comes out of the pockets of those people—that is a fact that he is always trying to run away from—and 40 per cent. of income tax comes from those on average earnings and less. I do not notice them saying that, they have sufficient take-home pay. If they were saying that, we should not have so many wage claims, which he supports all the way along the line.

Q5. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware that she has overwhelming support among thousands of workers whose jobs depend upon trade with South Africa for her stand against sanctions? Did the Commonwealth conference consider taking action against Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and Uganda, whose security forces are responsible for far more deaths resulting from police action against rioters than are those in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friends know that, among other matters, I can see little point in sanctions which will create more unemployment in this country, only to create more unemployment in South Africa. That seems to me to be a ridiculous policy and one that would not work.

With regard to the other matter, violence is never acceptable as an instrument of political change. The

sooner we get that message home, the better. The Opposition will not agree with that, but the Government say that violence is never acceptable as an instrument of political change.

Mr. Faulds: In her opposition to international terrorism, would the Prime Minister care to comment on the Israeli bombing attacks in Tunis and the American piracy in forcing an Egyptian plane to land in Sicily, which then nearly led to Italian troops, in defending Italian sovereignty, having to shoot American soldiers who wanted to take the Palestinians straight to the United States?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, we have in fact condemned the attack on Tunis.

With regard to the second part, an act of piracy had already occurred in taking over a cruise ship. I believe that the United States was fully justified in attempting to bring those pirates to justice.

Q6. **Mr. Stern** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend join many Conservative Members in welcoming the final passage today of the Transport Bill, which will lead to a wider spread and more reliable public transport system, which has been fast disappearing over many years?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I shall be better pleased when the Bill completes its passage. It will end a system under which fares were going up and up, subsidies were going up and up, and services were going down and down. I believe that we shall get better service as a result of the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Freeson: Is it the Prime Minister's intention to restore to the inner cities the £2,000 million of resources that have been removed over the past few years?

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 the Government have allocated £1,900 million in urban programme grants to inner cities. The urban programme has more than tripled from £93 million in 1978-79 to £338 million in 1985-86 —[*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman has the brains to work it out for himself. The programme has more than tripled, from £93 million in 1978-79 to £338 million in 1985-86. We need to look not only at the amounts but at the use to which the money is put. We want to get far more value for money rather than increase the money available.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In future, could you try to restrict the amount of time taken by Ministers in replying to questions? Some of the statements, which were not replies, were supercilious and, indeed, stopped me asking question No. 15, which is very important.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be a very good practice in the House if questions and answers could be briefer.

Commonwealth Meeting

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I will, with permission, Mr. Speaker, make a brief statement on my visits to Nassau for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting from 16-22 October, and to New York on 23-24 October for the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary accompanied me to Nassau.

I have arranged for copies of the communiqué from the Commonwealth meeting to be placed in the Library of the House.

Much of our time at that meeting was devoted to the problems of South Africa. We were unanimous in our abhorrence of apartheid, in our wish to see fundamental peaceful change in South Africa as soon as possible, and in our desire to find practical ways in which the Commonwealth could help secure that objective.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has already told the House, we reached an agreement which was endorsed by all 46 Governments attending the meeting. That agreement is set out in the Commonwealth accord on South Africa. I wish to emphasise four points from the accord.

First, we called on the South African Government to establish a dialogue with representatives of the black community with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government. Secondly, the dialogue should be initiated in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. Thirdly, we agreed to set up a group of eminent Commonwealth persons to encourage and facilitate dialogue. Fourthly, we agreed on a programme of common action which incorporated a number of measures which we were already taking, together with two new measures of which my right hon. and learned Friend has already informed the House.

The Commonwealth accord is a clear political signal from the united members of the Commonwealth of the need for rapid change within South Africa as well as of the need for the South African Government to end their illegal occupation of Namibia. We shall review the situation in six months' time.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed on a number of other matters, including a declaration on world order reaffirming the support of the Commonwealth for the United Nations, a welcome for the report of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on the vulnerability of small states; the need for greater co-operation both to counter the international traffic in illicity drugs and to deny to those convicted of drug trafficking the proceeds of their crime, and the need for greater co-operation to prevent and combat terrorism.

I believe that the outcome of the meeting demonstrated the capacity of the Commonwealth, despite widely varying initial views, to reach a sensible and realistic agreement acceptable to all Governments. Its rejection of violence as a way to solve the problems of South Africa is of particular importance. I believe that the outcome of the meeting is one which fully meets the interests and concerns of the United Kingdom.

I subsequently visited New York from 23 to 24 October to address the 40th anniversary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and for meetings with other Heads of Government. I held bilateral discussions with President Reagan, Prime Minister Craxi, Prime Minister Peres, Premier Zhao Ziyang and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I also attended a meeting with President Reagan and the Heads of Government of Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Japan to discuss the forthcoming meeting of the President and Mr. Gorbachev. We expressed our support for, and confidence in, President Reagan's approach to this important meeting and we wish him well.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): We welcome the Prime Minister's further condemnation of apartheid in her statement but regret that she undermines the force of her words against apartheid by saying that she is willing to take only a "tiny little bit" of action against apartheid.

The Prime Minister has spoken on previous occasions of "signals" to South Africa. Does she not realise that the inconsistency between her words and her actions signals only comfort to President Botha and those of his regime? Is she further aware that leaders of opinion in South Africa, including Desmond Tutu, reject her excuses for not imposing tougher sanctions as sophistries, and that many inside and outside South Afrjca agree with that estimate of her attitude?

On 25 July the right hon. Lady told the House that sanctions would be "counter-productive". Is she aware that we welcome the change in that view, which she has signified by her agreement to the Nassau accord and the way in which she belatedly recognises the failure of so-called constructive engagement strategies, and that we also welcome the usefulness of economic pressures in pursuit of peaceful change in South Africa, which she now apparently endorses?

We wish every success to the Commonwealth mission, provided, of course, that its activities are not used as a means of delaying or diminishing pressures on apartheid from outside. In order to clarify her position on the initiative, will the Prime Minister confirm that when she reviews the situation in six months' time she will be prepared to join in further action if the Commonwealth leaders on that mission judge that further pressure is required?

I gather that there is some difficulty in choosing a British representative for the Commonwealth mission. I put it to the Prime Minister that we have a number of very suitable candidates in the House and that she could usefully consider distinguished and well qualified Members, including, perhaps, those from Cardiff and Bexley. *[Interruption.]* We will settle for "useful". "Superb" would involve my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey).

We hear what the Prime Minister says about the need to stop violence in South Africa, and of course we earnestly hope that that will occur, but will she tell us what she is doing to ensure that the inherent violent system of apartheid is ended, for that, in itself, is the root of all political violence in South Africa?

As for the Prime Minister's discussions with President Reagan, her statement was, to say the least, very uncommunicative. May I ask her the following questions, so that she can enlarge on what she has told us?

First, are the Americans still willing to negotiate about the arms race in space, which was agreed between Mr. Gromyko and Mr. Shultz at their February meeting in

order to set the agenda for the forthcoming summit, and does that agreement include discussion of the strategic defence initiative?

Secondly, does the Prime Minister stand by her statement in New York on 24 October:

"as I understand it there will be a further initiative before the meeting"

between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev on 19 November? Is that still the right hon. Lady's feeling, or was that wishful thinking, resulting from the reasonable desire which she and others have that President Reagan will announce counter-proposals before going to Geneva? Can she, in any event, confirm that President Reagan will report back to NATO after the Geneva summit?

Thirdly, is the Prime Minister aware — [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] The Prime Minister could have said all this in her statement if she had not made it so abrupt. Is the Prime Minister aware that while a plan to curb regional conflicts between the super-powers would be welcome, especially in respect of the middle east, that process should not distract attention, diminish effort or in any way inhibit work to secure an early agreement to stop the nuclear arms race?

Fourthly, and finally, can the Prime Minister confirm that she interprets the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty in the same way as Mr. Shultz and Mr. Paul Nitze, and that so-called new principles could not justify the testing of components or of sub-components of an anti-ballistic missile system?

The Prime Minister: I note that when I make a long statement the right hon. Gentleman wants it short, and that when I make it short he wants it long. I tried to be brief in this statement. It suits me very well when the statement is briefer than the questions.

As regards sanctions, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, the Labour Government were absolutely against far-reaching economic sanctions. Indeed, they said in 1978—[AN HON. MEMBER: "That was the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)."] No, it was not. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said:

"We voted against"—

the sanctions—

"together with France, West Germany, the USA and some other Western countries because we do not agree that the far-reaching economic measures which the resolution calls for would produce the changes in South Africa which we would all like to see." —[*Official Report*, 16 January 1978; Vol. 942, c. 9.]

We wholly agree. That is why we are fully against——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): That was never Labour party policy.

The Prime Minister: That was stated from this Box — not by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—on 16 January 1978 as official Labour party policy, even if the hon. Gentleman does not like it.

The only strict sanction that we are operating at the moment is the one against armaments, in accordance with the mandatory resolution of the Security Council, which we have been operating for some time. The others are not strictly sanctions. They are a number of unilateral measures, that we have been taking for some time, concerning such things as add-on computers, new nuclear contracts, and so on. The only two small ones are on krugerrands, where we have agreed to do all that we can, because there are legal limitations, to stop their importation—the import is very small indeed—and to stop new grants from taxpayers' money for trade missions to South Africa.

Several eminent persons are under consideration for the mission to which I referred. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to add to the list which he has already provided.

I was pleased to hear what the right hon. Gentleman said about stopping violence and that all his hon. Friends want the violence to stop. That is not what I thought he was saying, as he appears to support Mr. Tambo, and what Mr. Tambo has said:

"The ANC will go to every conceivable length to destroy the apartheid system in South Africa. The escalated armed struggle cannot avoid the use of guns."

I understand that the right hon. Gentleman totally and utterly rejects that statement, and I am delighted to hear it.

As regards the talks in New York, the SDI research, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, is outside the anti-ballistic missile treaty. I do not believe that the Americans will negotiate on research. There is no way, as the right hon. Gentleman should know, in which one can verify what research is going on. I think, therefore, that research on both sides of the strategic defence initiative — because a good deal is being carried out on the Soviet side — will continue and will not be bargainable in these talks.

As regards the new possible initiative, the United States put forward proposals at Geneva in the talks on strategic arms reduction for radical reductions in ballistic missile warheads—a cut of nearly 50 per cent. in the current Soviet level. That was put down in the spring. Those proposals, together with a look at the new Gorbachev proposals, will, I believe, give rise to new initiatives before the talks are actually started.

President Reagan has said that he will come to NATO to tell us the results of the talks after they have taken place, so that he will have consulted both before and after them. Regional conflicts will, I believe, be on the agenda, but, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, it is not easy to find solutions to the middle east conflict.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Will my right hon. Friend rub in still further to the Leader of the Opposition the message that, whatever the shortcomings of the South African Government, President Botha has done more to reform and to roll back or contain the Soviet interference on the northern borders than the Governments of South Africa with whom the Labour party was happy to work? Will she confirm that while arms control is essential, the regional problems of Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Nicaragua have been the main cause of the arms race over the past few years, and that it is essential that the Soviet Union should realise this?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend that the South African Government have taken more steps than were taken by any of their predecessors to start the process of dismantling apartheid. A considerable number of measures have been taken—the Mixed Marriages Act and section 16 of the Immorality Act have been repealed, almost all job reservations have been removed and forced removals have been suspended, the abolition of influx control and pass laws has been recommended to the President by his advisory council, and a common

[The Prime Minister]

citizenship for all South Africans has been restored. These are considerable steps towards the process of removing apartheid—a process which will need to continue, and to which the dialogue is directed.

I agree that, as well as arms control, it is vital that some trouble spots in the world, including Afghanistan—which is illegally occupied—central America and other parts of the world, and the presence of Cuban troops in Africa must be discussed at the summit because that are manifestations of the difference of approach between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): In the light of the talks with President Reagan, will the Prime Minister give a sign of the British attitude on two specific aspects of the anti-ballistic missile treaty? First, do we believe that the nine technology demonstrations planned as part of the strategic defence initiative programme in the United States are outlined by the treaty? Secondly, do we believe that the Soviet Union is in breach of the ABM treaty because of its radar installations?

The Prime Minister: We believe in what is known as the more conventional interpretation of the treaty, which includes most, although not all, of the testing. There have been suggestions that certain actions are not in compliance with the treaty. These actions probably fall into two kinds—those which may be genuine non-compliance, and those which result from an ambiguity of the wording of the treaty. The treaty provides a way to sort out those problems, because machinery exists, in the standing consultative commission on the treaty, for the United States and the Soviet Union to discuss implementation of the ABM treaty. That appears to be the right place to discuss compliance if there are suggestions that the treaty is not being complied with.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Was there any discussion at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting on helping the developing world by joint ventures such as that between France, Japan and ourselves in Sri Lanka? Would not one way to help the developing world be such joint ventures, and would they not help the expansion of world trade and be an indirect way of helping to improve our balance of trade with Japan?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is very much aware, aid projects, particularly big ones involving capital aid, are frequently joint ventures between two or three countries, each one setting its own aid and trade provisions and making provision for the requisite interest rate. We already have joint projects, greatly to the advantage of projects in developing countries. Sri Lanka is a particular example.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Is the Prime Minister aware that during her absence the Palace of Westminster witnessed the biggest lobby in its history on overseas aid? Does she not therefore regret that the matter was barely discussed—if it was discussed at all—at the Commonwealth conference, and, still more, that at the United Nations she was unable to confirm that Britain is on course to achieve its meagre target because Britain has slipped in the international league table on account of the reductions since 1979?

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom aid programme, at 0·33 per cent. of GDP, is close to the OECD average, which is 0·36 per cent. of GDP. To that has to be added the considerable private flows. Taking the official and private flows together, the United Kingdom figure is 1·25 per cent. of GNP, which is well above the United Nations target of 1 per cent.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Not enough.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman would like more aid to be provided, and I am the first to understand the reasons why, we have to look at our other expenditure. We cannot spend money over and over again, because the taxpayer is expected to cough up every time. Therefore, I suggest that we should look at what else we can spend less on if we wish to spend more on aid.

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): Can my right hon. Friend say a little more about the talks in New York which touched on the middle east? Does she accept that there is widespread support for her recent effort to break the log-jam and make progress? Will she persevere in those efforts, which rightly included the need for a Palestinian voice?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that the case for a Palestinian voice is in dispute. It is who should represent that voice that is in dispute. As my hon. Friend knows, we tried to take an initiative and there was a carefully measured statement. We do not accept violence as a means of pursuing a political end. Unfortunately, the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was not seen by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, for very good reasons. The understanding on which the meeting was set up was not a statement that they were prepared to make. Nevertheless, we must persist in trying to get a settlement of the middle east problem. The United States, Jordan and Prime Minister Peres understand that before negotiations can start there must be a framework of international support. The precise framework is the subject at the moment of many discussions.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The Prime Minister is surely aware that to include private flow figures is a smokescreen in relation to the overall aid programme; that the average figures for the OECD disguise the fact that Britain, in terms of aid per head, is 12th among the OECD countries and is giving half that which is given by most Scandinavian countries, and only a quarter of that which is given by Norway. Does the Prime Minister realise that if she, with other Heads of Government, were to achieve the 0·7 per cent. target it could create 2 million jobs in the OECD countries, many of which would come to the United Kingdom? When will she set at least a teeny-weeny target, such as increasing aid from 0·33 to 0·35 per cent. of GNP, so that we can have some indication that aid will go up rather than down?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's premise that we should not also look at private flows. Many Heads of Government are prepared and anxious to get more private capital into those countries because they wish to develop their resources. If the Opposition would like more money to be spent on aid, as many people would, they must not spend money at the same time on other things. If expenditure at home on social security goes up and up, what can be spent on giving help

abroad will not be sufficient. Therefore, the Opposition should look at expenditure at home if they wish to change the balance.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I appreciate that the summit meeting dealt mainly with South Africa and apartheid, but can my right hon. Friend say how much time was spent discussing the lack of freedom and the compulsory absence of Opposition parties in newly independent African countries? Does she agree that at future Commonwealth summit meetings this matter should be fully discussed by our partners?

The Prime Minister: In the views that I took up on a number of matters, I was very conscious of the fact that not every Commonwealth country was a perfect example of democracy. I suspect that others were also conscious of that.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that the clear political signal that she sent to South Africa with her talk of "tiny measures" shows basically that she believes in the appeasement of the apartheid regime in South Africa, in much the same way as Neville Chamberlain believed in the appeasement of the Nazi regime in Germany?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the apartheid system must come to an end and that through negotiation we are going the right way about bringing it to an end. I do not believe that apartheid will be brought to an end by creating unemployment in hon. Members' constituencies in this country in order to create more unemployment in South Africa.

Hon. Members: But we have it already.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): On the second point about the Commonwealth accord, is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be much support in this country and beyond for the part which she played in getting the agreement that there should be a suspension of violence on all sides in South Africa signed by all Commonwealth leaders?

The Prime Minister: To get full Commonwealth agreement that there should be a suspension of violence when negotiations between the South African Government and representatives of the black community start was a great advance and a significant achievement. I am delighted that we all signed it, because it has helped to achieve a general agreement.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): But why, having spent so long getting that agreement, did the Prime Minister see fit to belittle the amount of movement that she had made? In what way did that contribute to the clarity of the signal? Will her reluctance to undertake certain measures, which she eventually overcame in the wider interest, be carried through in the British attitude to the enforcement of the measures?

The Prime Minister: I think that many people there realised not only that sanctions would cause great damage to industries in South Africa but that they could be counter-productive, in that they would induce exactly the attitude that we do not wish to have. They would also have very damaging effects on the African countries which have tried to increase trade with South Africa a great deal in the last year. As some countries pointed out, they, too, have preferential trading arrangements with South Africa which they do not wish to stop. There was a good deal more reality than would appear from some of the rhetoric. The hon. Gentleman should not lose sight of that.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): When my right hon. Friend met Mr. Peres, and in subsequent diplomatic exchanges, did she congratulate him on the proposals in his speech to the General Assembly? Is she encouraging him to have direct negotiations with King Hussein?

The Prime Minister: Whether or when those direct negotiations start between the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and representatives from Israel will depend on whether we can find an international framework within which they can take place. I do not think that it is realistic to expect them to start without that framework. Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware of the sensitivities involved.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): How many people in South Africa must be killed by the security forces in a campaign of open ferocity before the right hon. Lady concedes to South Africans the right to defend themselves and to fight to save their lives and their freedoms? Does she not understand that apartheid is the root of violence, that violence is being committed in the name of apartheid, and that until she takes action, on behalf of this country she will be regarded as an ally of South Africa, with blood on her hands?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the apartheid is the root of violence—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—No, I do not accept that, and nor do most other people. How, then, could one explain the total and utter violence in Uganda? I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's proposition.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Why do Commonwealth conferences have to conclude with unanimous decisions? What was wrong with us staying in honourable isolation on the principles for which we have already fought? Is my right hon. Friend aware that now that we have taken this tiny step on the escalator of economic sanctions it will be difficult, if not impossible, to get off?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not accept that. We obtained a very good agreed result throughout the whole of the Commonwealth. It was more important to achieve that—especially the condemnation of violence and the recognition that economic sanctions would not work—than to issue a separate British statement.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is it not a fact that the Prime Minister's opposition to international economic action against the racist apartheid regime of South Africa has nothing to do with the 250,000 jobs which she estimates could be affected by such action? After all, she does not care a jot about the 2 million people whom she has put on the dole during the past six years. Is her opposition not precisely to do with the fact that British companies own 40 per cent. of foreign investment in South Africa? Did not Consolidated Gold Fields make £115 million profit last year through paying black miners £21 a week? It is profit, not jobs, that has dictated the right hon. Lady's action.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should be very much aware that industry has been in the forefront of

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breaking down apartheid. The standard of living of black Africans in South Africa often exceeds the standard of living of those in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. South Africa is a strong economy, and the gold miners to whom the hon. Gentleman referred refused to strike.

Mr. Nellist: No, they did not. They were beaten into submission.

The Prime Minister: Many black people in South Africa have a high standard of education and culture, and it is rising every day. Therefore, that is not the problem —it is that they do not have a proper right to take part in government. That is what we are trying to rectify.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the realism and courage that she has displayed, not only in Nassau but in the House this afternoon, in defence of an evolutionary, non-violent retreat from the tragedy that apartheid has inflicted on South Africa.

When the other Heads of State in Nassau were attempting to forge the weapon of nuclear condemnation, were they at any stage aware that they were providing the world with the most vivid illustration that it has had in two millennia of the wisdom of the parable of the beam and the mote?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his question. He has made all his points very forcefully indeed.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): In view of the unanimous call of the Commonwealth Heads of State to the South African Government not to execute Daniel Moloise, has the right hon. Lady changed her mind about capital punishment, or is it simply that she says one thing abroad but votes another way in this House?

The Prime Minister: No, I have not changed my mind. Some of the Commonwealth Heads who put their names to that motion have capital punishment in their countries for crimes far less serious than murder—for example, for dealing in drugs.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her efforts to achieve a fair return on British participation in the strategic defence initiative programme, but may I ask when she expects to obtain an agreement, and when she expects to be able to announce such an agreement?

The Prime Minister: I regret that I cannot answer that, but I shall pursue the matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Was it not an appropriate comment on the Prime Minister's performance at the Nassau conference that a group of the most ardent supporters of the South African regime marched to a number of embassies, and when they reached the British embassy raised three cheers for the right hon. Lady?

Is the right hon. Lady aware that for more than 70 years the African National Congress has tried to avoid violence, but, faced with the violence of the regime and the denial of basic political human rights, it reached the conclusion that there was no alternative? Would it not help matters if the Prime Minister later today listened to the evidence being given to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs by Mr. Oliver Tambo?

The Prime Minister: No, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will listen to many other black South Africans who do not want sanctions and utterly deplore violence. I very much regret that Chief Buthelezi is not receiving him, but many of us have seen him.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend recall that prior to the Nassau summit Opposition Members were gloatingly predicting that the thorny question of South Africa would lead to the break-up of the Commonwealth? Has that not proved to be far from true? Has not the agreement signed by every Commonwealth state proved to be a major diplomatic success for this country and this Government?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it was a major success, both for the content of the accord and for the wisdom of going for the path of negotiation rather than violence, and keeping the Commonwealth together. Many Heads of State were pleased that the question of sanctions did not go any further, especially as some countries have preferential trade treaties with South Africa.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have two other very important statements to follow.

Immigration

4.4 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Following the recent exchanges in the House, I will, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, make a statement about representations made by right hon. and hon. Members in immigration cases.

Ministers receive large numbers of representations from Members of this House on a wide variety of individual cases. What distinguishes those made on behalf of passengers refused entry at the ports is that they have the effect of securing an immediate change in the action that would otherwise be taken by the immigration service under the relevant statutory provisions. The service is by convention, though not by law, precluded from arranging the passenger's removal until the hon. Member's representations have been received and considered. In the vast majority of cases, the passenger is granted temporary admission. In a small minority of cases, he may be held in detention at the port.

Home Office Ministers received representations on immigration cases about 20 times a week in 1980. Last year, the average was some 70 a week. During the past few weeks there have been 200 representations a week. The increase since 1980 is not the result of some dramatic change in the criteria being employed by immigration officers at the ports in operating the immigration rules. Nor can it be explained by an increase in passenger traffic, which has increased by 25 per cent. while hon. Members representations have increased fivefold taking the year as a whole. What is happening is that hon. Members are being approached and asked to put stops on cases more often than in the past, and hon. Members are agreeing to ask for stops on cases more often than in the past.

That increase has created real administrative problems for the staff at the ports. People are being temporarily admitted who do not qualify as visitors under the rules, and who often spend a considerable time here. The diversion of staff to deal with increasing representations and the case work involved has meant that visitors who are fully qualified find themselves held up and inconvenienced at Heathrow.

Against that background, I believe that it was entirely right for my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State to bring the position to the notice of the House. I wish to make it clear that my hon. and learned Friend was not at any time sugesting that the law had been broken. In his letter yesterday to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), he described the ways in which the present arrangements are being misused.

It was argued yesterday that my hon. and learned Friend should have given specific examples to the House of the action taken by particular hon. Members. As he explained, he could not have done that without revealing the terms of the letters that they had written to or about individual immigrants and, in two cases, letters written by them to third parties. He is writing today to 23 hon. Members, whose cases are examples of the various problems that we are facing, seeking their permission to make such correspondence public.

There are obvious difficulties, for example when hon. Members make representations on behalf of sponsors of whom they have made no inquiries, and when they arrange for a stop to be placed on a passenger's removal but fail to follow up the initial telephone call with a confirmatory letter. There is also concern that some hon. Members are willing to take up cases from outside their constituencies, which the constituency Member has chosen not to pursue. Here again, some restatement of the agreed conventions of the House is needed.

Finally, there are one or two cases in which it seems to us that an hon. Member is deliberately facilitating the attempt to secure the temporary admission of a passenger whom he has every reason to believe would not qualify for entry under the rules approved by this House. I am not suggesting that, even where that happens, hon. Members have acted unlawfully; they have not. But if their actions were to be more widely copied, the result could only be the weakening of our system of immigration control, based at the ports of entry. I believe that our present system suits both our geography and our constitution and that we need collectively to consider how it can best continue to operate.

I ask the House to accept that we wish to make a genuine attempt to strike the right balance between the representations of hon. Members and the need for an effective and efficient control without the strains at present imposed on it. We are anxious to discuss these difficulties urgently with those in this House who are mainly concerned, in the hope of working out a sensible answer. In any case, there will not be any changes in our procedures before I have reported to the House.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I apologise for not being in my place when the Home Secretary rose to make his statement.

The House will wish to thank in equal measure both yourself, Mr. Speaker, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), without whom the statement would not have been obtained. Even after the right hon. Gentleman's statement, and the strange letter sent to me yesterday by the Minister of State, the reckless allegations made by the Minister of State remain unsubstantiated.

The Home Secretary appears to be totally confused about the rules relating to visitors. He said that the Minister of State had talked about the right to enter. The Home Secretary talked about the qualification of visitors —he used the phrase "qualify as visitors"—when most would-be visitors have the automatic right to enter unless deprived of it by the Home Secretary. The huge increase in representations from hon. Members to which Ministers have drawn attention proves that the Minister of State is increasingly withdrawing the right of entry from certain categories of visitor.

We totally reject the claim that there has been no change in the way in which the rules are being administered, and we are worried by the Home Secretary referring in his statement to changes in procedure. Will he categorically assure the House that he has no intention of imposing a visa requirement for visitors or limiting the existing rights of hon. Members?

As for alleged "abuses," they are not abuses at all. If an hon. Member was confined to taking up cases the full particulars of which he knew, as mentioned by the Minister of State in his letter, we should none of us be able to take up social security or income tax cases, because we take up those cases to get the facts. That is so in these cases as well. If an hon. Member—again, as requested and apparently required by the Minister of State — were

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confined to taking up only the cases of constituents he knew personally, thousands of people in every constituency would never have any cases taken up.

Other allegations made by the Minister relate to relationships between hon. Members. They are matters, if at all, not for the Government, not for the Home Secretary, not for the Minister of State but for you, Mr. Speaker, and the House.

In essence, the allegations that the Government are making add up to a whine about the actions of hon. Members being an inconvenience to the Executive. But one of the most essential functions of an hon. Member is to be an inconvenience to the Executive. If the volume of representations is a burden to the Home Office and its Ministers, let me make it absolutely clear that the administration of the rules of entry is a burden to thousands of our constituents looking forward to visits from relatives. The Home Secretary looks upon those people as inconvenient statistics, but they are human beings with warm family feelings, and they have the same right to have visits as any other of our constituents. Our efforts to help them may be a great deal of trouble to Ministers, but we are determined to go on helping them, and that is a lesson that the Home Secretary had better learn.

On Thursday, the Minister of State twice asserted that some hon. Members were "abusing their right." Yesterday in the exchanges in the House he used the word "abuse" three times. In his letter to me he used the word "abuse" nine times. Today in his statement the Home Secretary did not once use the word "abuse." Instead, he mentioned 23 hon. Members whose cases, he said, were examples of "the problems that we are facing."

We want to know clearly and without equivocation from the Home Secretary whether he alleges that hon. Members have been abusing their position. If he says that there has been abuse, we want the names. We demand the names, because hon. Members have the right to defend themselves against charges made by Ministers in this House. Either the Home Secretary provides the names or he resiles from the accusation. If he resiles from the accusation, the Minister of State should resign.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman must have worked that response out before he heard my statement. He is perfectly correct to say that I did not use the word "abuse". I used the word "misuse". If, with his knowledge of the English language, he wants to make something of that, he is welcome to do so.

The right hon. Gentleman will get the names. My hon. and learned Friend is setting about the task in the right way. He is writing today to 23 hon. Members asking for their consent that the correspondence in question illustrating those problems should be published. That is straightforward and that is what is happening.

On the substance of the matter, I reiterate that the policy has not changed since my hon. and learned Friend has been responsible for it. I will read to the House, because it is the heart of the matter, rule 17 of the immigration rules. It is what immigration officers have administered under the supervision of my hon. and learned Friend and under the supervision of Ministers of State of Labour Governments. It is, in essence, the same rule:

"A passenger seeking entry as a visitor, including one coming to stay with relatives or friends, is to be admitted if he satisfies the immigration officer that he is genuinely seeking entry for the period of the visit as stated by him and that for that period he will maintain and accommodate himself and any dependants, or will, with any dependants, be maintained and accommodated adequately by relatives or friends, without working or recourse to public funds, and can meet the cost of the return or onward journey."

That simple requirement has existed for many years. That is what immigration officers must administer, and there has been no change in it.

The hon. Gentleman referred to visas. As he knows—and again, as has been the practice—the position is kept under continuous review. The comparison that the right hon. Gentleman made with social security benefits was illuminating. We are all the time asking as constituency Members, for example, that benefit for one or other of our constituents should be reconsidered or increased. But we do not expect the benefit automatically to be increased while our representations are being considered.

What, so far as I know, makes this facility unique is that there is a covention—which the right hon. Gentleman supports and wishes to maintain, as I do—that automatically a stop is placed and the action that would otherwise be taken is suspended. The problem is now caused partly by the increasing number of arrivals and partly by the increase in the number of representations.

It is not a matter of inconvenience to the Home Office or of administrative inconvenience. *[Interruption.]* The principal consequence is that under the rule to which I referred people who should not be allowed entry are allowed in. That is not what Parliament intended, and we should consider carefully among ourselves how this facility, which we wish to preserve, is to be preserved.

Mr. Kaufman: Mr. Speaker——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call the right hon. Gentleman again at the end.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many residents here wishing to invite relatives to spend a holiday with them would be prepared to give a bond, to be produced at a point of entry, which would prevent all the hassle that their relatives undergo and would be far better than the farcial situation when an hon. Member intervenes, there is a stop and the Home Office takes six to eight weeks to investigate the case, by which time the relative has returned home, having spent his holiday here, with a great deal of bureaucratic time having been wasted?

Mr. Hurd: I appreciate the point that my hon. Friend makes. A change in the law would, I think, be required to accommodate his suggestion, which would put a premium on the possession of resources. Let us consider it.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the Home Secretary accept that the strength of family ties, which his party very much favours, means that families that wish to receive visitors from abroad are represented in many constituencies, and that it is inevitable that our constituents will bring cases to our attention where there have been difficulties?

Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is inevitable that an hon. Member may have to act urgently to prevent a visitor being sent back without knowing the full facts of the case at that point? Does he agree that one

can ascertain the details and make proper representations only after a stop has been put on a constituent's relative, and he has, perhaps, been sent back to his home country?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there is often a great deal of bewilderment on the part of both the visitor and the family? In many instances the visitor may not be able to understand why he has been prevented from making an ordinary visit to his family, and many families offer the very bond that his hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) suggested. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that many Liberal Members are concerned that they are having to spend a great deal of time working on cases where the visitor should never have been stopped from entering Britain in the first place?

Mr. Hurd: Of course it is right that there are special cases and peculiar circumstances. That is why we accept that right hon. and hon. Members have a right and a duty to make representations where they know of such cases. That is what it is all about. The trouble is that there are too many cases where, for example, a stop is imposed because a Member of Parliament has made a telephone call, which is not followed by later representations. That is one of the larger examples of what is going wrong. It is because we want to preserve the facility that right hon. and hon. Members enjoy that we are anxious to overcome the strains that its misuse is putting on the system as a whole.

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that I for one have always experienced a certain disquiet when exercising this facility? It is impossible, through a letter or telephone call to the constituent, in any way to judge the merits of the case. Nevertheless, in the present circumstances I always feel obliged to telephone the Department of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, who, in my view, does a difficult job extraordinarily well. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I find that his Department is most helpful when I telephone to ask its officials to impose a stop. I would welcome some guidance on when we should or should not exercise this difficult facility.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I think that he is right. On reflection, right hon. and hon. Members will accept that we are discussing a unique facility for Members and that with it goes responsibility for the way in which it is exercised. I agree that it is sensible that we should discuss together, in whatever way seems sensible to hon. Members on both sides of the House who are faced with this problem, exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) is talking about, which is how the facility is to be preserved and how the responsibility which Members have in exercising it is to be defined.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Is the Home Secretary aware that the matter is far more complicated than he seems to understand? He is a new Home Secretary and I for one would be prepared to talk to him seriously on the issue and even to lighten the burden of the Minister of State. The right hon. Gentleman must understand that those of us who represent large immigrant communities, or erstwhile immigrant communities, are bound to find that certain of the families receive visitors. One example is the Sikhs in my constituency. Through the problems in India, for example, a number of young people have come in to Britain from India. That will have given rise inevitably to greater surveillance at the port of entry and will have placed a greater strain on the immigration officers, who are complaining bitterly of a shortage of staff and the way in which they have to treat passengers at the port of entry. All that has to be considered.

I should like to involve you to some extent, Mr. Speaker, and put it in the mind of the Home Secretary that it has always been traditional in the House of Commons that, if a constituent claims that his Member has failed or refused to act for him, it is an elementary fact that any hon. Member is qualified to act for him. There are only a few occasions when I have had so to act but occasionally I do, and I find mostly that Tory Members are pleased that I do so when they are absent on holiday or for other reasons. I shall continue so to act according to the tradition of the House.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has a particularly heavy responsibility in this area and I am sure that he always discharges it with great care. I take what he has to say especially seriously. I emphasise that there has not been any change of policy or of the rules. However, a problem is being created and I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is a need to discuss the issue carefully, in whatever way is most orderly, to find a way of easing the strain. I shall put the matter into perspective by saying that 99 per cent. of all passengers arriving in this country from the subcontinent last year were admitted without difficulty of any kind.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, by misusing the spirit of the regulations, hon. Members do a great disservice to immigrant communities?

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Whose spirit?

Mr. Soames: Would my right hon. Friend agree also that if this state of affairs continues, we shall have no option but to put visas on at the point of departure?

Mr. Hurd: I have already answered a question about visas. I agree with my hon. Friend that one of the problems and one of the symptoms of strain in the machine is that visitors who are wholly entitled under the rule that I have read to come into Britain on a visit are held up and inconvenienced, especially at terminal 3 at Heathrow, because of the increasing number of people who are not so entitled but who present themselves.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Is the Home Secretary aware that one of the greatest abuses to which Asian and black people in Britian take exception is that they and their relatives are interrogated for many hours while white Americans who come over from the United States are allowed through immigration control, with virtually no difficulty whatsoever? This creates enormous problems in places such as Birmingham and elsewhere, which adds to the festering situation.

What does the right hon. Gentleman expect Members to do when they are knocked up in the middle of the night to find that someone, perhaps soaked to the skin, has come from Heathrow upon being told by an immigration officer, "Unless we hear from your MP by early in the morning, your elderly father will be sent back home"? Is that not an outrage to the integrity of our affairs? Does the right hon.

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Gentleman expect hon. Members to be sitting at home every day and every week, including weekends and holidays, to placate the demands of the immigration service as required by Home Office Ministers?

Mr. Hurd: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman, with his long experience in these matters, should place that sort of imputation on the way in which immigration officers do their job. Where there are specific complaints of maltreatment of something approaching that, the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues should take them up. I know from my own postbag and from the letters which I am asked to sign of the great care that the immigration service and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and officials in the Home Office devote to investigating all such allegations and dealing with them faithfully.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he will find widespread support among the minority communities for any attempt to stamp out abuses of the immigration system? The minority communities have suffered quite enough in the past from those who have been only too willing to encourage them to attempt to deceive immigration authorities, and they have usually paid the penalty. Is he further aware that they will not thank anyone who, through his abuse of the system, further restricts the rights of those of us who seek to help visitors who are refused entry and who we believe sincerely are genuine?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is entirely right on both counts. It is crucial for good race relations in Britain that the immigration system we operate should be seen to be fair. I think that the whole House will agree with that. It would not be a good thing if the system were seen to be weak or open to misuse, and that is the problem.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Is the Home Secretary aware that it may be that those who are abusing the system are some of the immigration officers themselves? How can he have any confidence in some of his immigration officers when he hears, for example, that a young man from India has come to Britain as he wishes to attend his sister's wedding in Scotland, that she is a British subject who is marrying a British subject and that they are to live in a house that is owned by a British subject, and yet there is difficulty in allowing that young man to come for a week to attend the wedding? Can he have any confidence in immigration officers when difficulties arise in a case such as that?

Mr. Hurd: I have read to the House the rule governing visits and the House can judge whether that rule is arbitrary, unfair or tyrannical. I do not think it is, and it has been there for a long time. Immigration officers are being criticised in the House. They do a remarkably difficult job under increasing strain—it is the strain we are talking about—and they do it with great patience and responsibility. I am surprised that the debate should have taken this turn, because the criticisms made are unjustified.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): How much has this misuse of privileges by a few Members of Parliament cost the taxpayer?

Mr. Hurd: The law provides that if a case drags on beyond two months, the cost of returning the person concerned to the country of origin ceases to be the responsibility of the airline and becomes the responsibility of the taxpayer. As the work load that we are discussing increases, it becomes more and more difficult to deal with every case in two months. We estimate that the cost to the taxpayer this year arising from these strains is likely to be about £1 million.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Home Secretary understand that the strains to which he refers are caused by a thoroughly inefficient system that is too often operated without kindness, compassion or courtesy, and that it leaves genuine visitors in long queues waiting for interpreters and sometimes locked up for the night, or longer? In many cases, it is unfair to blame individual immigration officers because there are not enough of them, but to blame Members of Parliament who are trying to help their constituents in this awful system is like blaming doctors for death or disease.

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. and learned Gentleman studies the categories and the ways in which we believe that the system of Members' representations is being misused, then, because he is a fair-minded man, he will be forced to the conclusion that this is one element, though not the only element, in the strain that I am talking about. That strain does a disservice not mainly to the administrators, but to the genuine visitor who is qualified to enter and to the whole system that we are trying to preserve.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): I have 18,000 constituents who might want to make use of this service. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is not the function of any hon. Member to act as judge and jury in deciding whether or not an individual should be allowed entry, but only to make responsible and proper representations to the Home Office?

Mr. Hurd: That is right. That is the heart of the matter.

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): It is quite clear from what the Home Secretary has said that he is straining at a gnat. Is he aware that last Thursday in the House, the Minister of State said that 1 million Commonwealth and Pakistani people had been allowed into the country last year and that he had representations during 1980 in only 1,000 cases and was expecting representations from Members in 4,500 cases this year? In other words, 1,000 was less than 0·01 per cent. If it is 4,500 this year, it will be less than 0·05 per cent. The Minister has referred to the rule. I have been in discussion with the Minister of State since last Friday—five days—about a black man whose brother is a British citizen. That British citizen has signed a statement, which I have here, with the Bangladesh High Commissioner saying he will keep, look after and be responsible for him and will see that he returns. That man has been refused entry into the country, kept on remand at public expense, and questioned during those five days. Can the Home Secretary look into that case? It constitutes a disgusting state of affairs, and I am very angry about it. It is one of the worst cases I have had for some years and it arises only because the man is black.

Mr. Hurd: I cannot comment on the hon. Member's individual case, but he is perfectly entitled to put it. There is no dispute about that. I will give again the figures which

relate to his first point. Representations by Members in port refusal cases have grown from about 1,000 a year in 1980, 1981 and 1982 to 3,532 last year. Up to 22 October this year the total was about 5,000. That is the fivefold increase I was talking about, and that is what is creating the strains. In view of the general conclusion made by the hon. Member, I should add that the proportion of refusals to entry has remained basically static during this time. It is not true that immigration officers are turning away or refusing entry to a larger proportion of people.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I am afraid my right hon. Friend is deluding himself if he thinks the situation will get any better. Would it not be better to get rid of all this nonsense by considering a visa scheme?

Mr. Hurd: As I have said, there are problems about any moves towards visas. I have said, and I chose my words carefully, that the matter of visa regimes is kept under continual review.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): Will the Home Secretary reconsider the answer that he gave in reply to the suggestion that there should be a bond system? Does he accept that if he were sympathetically to consider such an idea, he would be extending the bail system, which is totally unacceptable in matters of immigration? Secondly, I have no doubt that the whole House accepts that the system is under tremendous strain. In this get together of hon. Members to consider suggestions, will the Home Secretary acknowledge and assure the House that he will double the staff in the Private Office? If the system is under strain, surely it is a matter of the number of people employed.

Mr. Hurd: It is partly that, but primarily that under the misuse of the system quite large numbers — [HON. MEMBERS: "What misuse?"] "Misuse" is the word that I have used for the past half hour. One consequence of misuse of the system is that large numbers of people, whom Parliament did not intend under the immigration laws to be admitted as visitors, are being admitted as visitors.

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this House, having listened to a characteristically hypocritical statement from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Member would rephrase that and withdraw the word "hypocritical."

Mr. Whitfield: I withdraw that word, Mr. Speaker, and say the misleading statement by the right hon. Member for Gorton—Members would do well to read the excellent letter that the Secretary of State wrote to the right hon. Gentleman and to read the six forms of abuse that the Minister of State has listed in that letter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope the hon. Gentleman will not read them all out.

Mr. Whitfield: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members should read that letter, which is in the Library, and acquaint themselves with the six forms of abuse which definitely exist. I have a lot of knowledge of those six forms. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the official Opposition are in danger of becoming the party that supports illegal immigration just as they support racial violence in our inner city areas?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Who is he?

Mr. Hurd: I do not entirely go along with all my hon. Friend's criticism of the right hon. Gentleman. The right hon. Gentleman slightly misinterpreted the mood of the House. This is a serious problem which affects the whole House. I hope we can continue this debate with the thought that there is a real problem. It is not one that we invented. The strain is real and is being felt increasingly on the ground. As my hon. Friend said, it may get worse. I am deeply worried about it. I hope that between us we can find a parliamentary way in which this issue can be sensibly discussed and the right way found to maintain a facility to which the House attaches great importance.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary accept that a system that allows 5,000 representations so far this year to be made to Members of Parliament evidently needs review as to the conventions that apply not only to Members of Parliament but to the rules? When discussing these matters with those of us who are ready to meet him will the Home Secretary consider the possibility of amending rule 17?

Mr. Hurd: I think that rule 17, which I read to the House, is a sane and thoughtful piece of work. I do not see defects in it. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the rest of his remarks.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): As one who has lived and worked in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, may I say, with respect to these complicated cases, that I have the utmost confidence in my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington). I believe that the decision to require Sri Lankan visitors to have visas is right. That system is working well. Bangladesh leaders in Northampton and I believe that a simpler system is needed, whereby people can come to Britain on holiday for three or four weeks. I should be more than happy to work with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to find a way around this problem.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Home Secretary admit that the Minister of State lost his temper and made false allegations and that that is the cause of the whole problem? The Minister of State should apologise to the House.

It is understandable that the Home Secretary does not understand the operation of immigration control. He told my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) that his story about what happened in Scotland was not typical, but he was wrong. These problems for our constituents occur every week. Genuine family members come here to visit their relations but they are turned away. Their only way in is by ringing their Member of Parliament. This causes an enormous amount—[HON. MEMBERS: "Their Member of Parliament—not you."] Let me say to those Conservative Members who shout that one of the reasons why Opposition Members are troubled by people who do not live in their constituencies is that they are telephoned by people who say, "My MP is racist and will not represent me."

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us keep the temperature down.

Ms. Short: I believe that Labour Members should compile a list of the people who frequently approach them. The origin of this problem is the fact that too many genuine visitors are refused entry. If they were not refused entry, there would be no need for Members of Parliament, the Minister and the visitors' families to be troubled, and everyone would be happier. That is the solution.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady is ignoring the fact that the proportion of refusals is no higher than it used to be. These facts are clearly established, but they do not suit the hon. Lady's doctrine. She does not do herself or her constituents any service by protesting so vehemently and passionately about matters — the views of other hon. Members—of which she cannot have much knowledge.

On the hon. Lady's first point, I think that it would be a poor day if a Minister could not come to the House at Question Time to explain something and volunteer views on a matter that was causing all of us genuine concern. That is what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State did, and I think that he would have been wrong not to do so.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the ability of Members of Parliament to make representations to the Home Secretary is a particular privilege and that, if that privilege is abused, it will damage us all? Is my right hon. Friend aware that on one occasion, when I refused to assist a person whom I thought was trying to obtain immigration clearance improperly, I was clearly told, "That does not matter. I can ring up a certain right hon. Member and he will get me clearance without any questions."? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it must be possible for hon. Members of good will on both sides of the House to agree to keep to a convention that assists us all?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has neatly encapsulated what I was trying to say.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Home Secretary agree that, so long as visitors who are refused entry to Britain are denied any right of appeal, the rights of Members of Parliament to stop removal and have a review of the immigration officer's decision are of great importance? Does he also agree that the serious allegations by the Minister of State are clearly a smokescreen behind which the Government are preparing to introduce a visa requirement for citizens of the new Commonwealth and Pakistan who wish to visit Britain in the future? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking, therefore, that no such visa requirement will be introduced without the clear approval of the House, in order to avoid the embarrassment that the Government might incur by introducing visa requirements while the House is not sitting next week? Will the right hon. Gentleman give a clear assurance that, if visa requirements are introduced, no impediment will be put in the way of the children of British citizens to prevent them from coming here and, if refused entry, from exercising their right of appeal here?

Mr. Hurd: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that there will be no change in the visa regimes next week while the House is prorogued. The hon. Gentleman's first point was not accurate. Parliament has granted a right of appeal, but——

Mr. Madden: Not here.

Mr. Hurd: Exactly; a right of appeal in the country of origin. By using the facilities about which we are talking, some hon. Members are prescribing something that Parliament has not prescribed — in effect, the right of someone to stay here while his case is looked at. That is not what Parliament intended.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): Is not the real cause of concern the fact that there are no automatic checks to ascertain that visitors, including more than 900,000 last year from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan, leave the country? Will my right hon. Friend and the Home Office investigate the possibility of using modern technology and computer science to ensure that these checks are made automatically?

Mr. Hurd: As my hon. Friend knows, there are problems. That point is one that we must consider.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the current position is totally unacceptable to a civilised country and that it is getting worse? Does he know that this month I have had six cases, with another one today, concerning people kept in detention? Does the right hon. Gentleman know that Mr. Patel was kept in detention for three weeks and that it took me 12 days to get any information out of the Home Office? I should have thought that even a murderer would be told why he had lost his liberty. I was even told that I could not get a reply because the appropriate Minister was at the Conservative party conference and I would have to wait until he returned.

Is it true that there is a shortage of staff at the ports and that untrained personnel are manning the immigration desks? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise the distress that this is causing and the burden that this is imposing on constituency Members of Parliament — perhaps not constituencies like the right hon. Gentleman's but the constituencies of my colleagues — who must cope with the system's inadequacies?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman should realise that the policy which has been pursued for many years is to minimise detention—to use detention only when there are serious reasons for supposing, for example, that a person might abscond. The proportion of people refused entry who are then detained has been decreasing while the proportion of those who are granted temporary admission has been increasing. Between 1977 and 1984 the percentage of those refused entry and then granted temporary admission has increased as a percentage of all passengers refused entry from 22 per cent. to 47 per cent.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is it not a fact that the Home Office is anxious that elderly parents and close relatives of people from overseas who are living in this country should be able to visit their loved ones? Is it not also a fact that there has been a surge of young people coming to Britain as holiday visitors, that many of them seek to change the status of their visit once they are here and that many of them disappear into the woodwork?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has characteristically stated both wings of the problem, which can only be resolved by having a sensible rule. I am glad that I started by reading out to the House rule 17. I think it is a sensible rule.

Mr. Kaufman: The Home Secretary has demonstrated a misunderstanding of what concerns Opposition Members. In dealing with the analogy of a person whose Member of Parliament seeks to obtain for him or her an increase in social security benefit, he says that the social security benefit is not increased while the application by the Member of Parliament is being considered. When the Member of Parliament's application is being considered, the social security benefit is not removed. The person whould be removed from the country unless the hon. Member made the application. That is the whole basis of the stop procedure.

The Home Secretary said that he wishes to discuss these matters with the hon. Members concerned. If he is willing to have discussions now, why did the Minister of State not ask for discussions before making his reckless allegations to the House last Thursday? Throughout the exchanges today the Home Secretary has consistently used the word "misuse" and consistently withdrawn from the word "abuse" which was used by his hon. and learned Friend. Does the Home Secretary confirm and endorse the word "abuse" as used by the Minister of State? If he does, we want the names of the hon. Members who are said to be conducting the abuse. Unless he comes clean on this, it is he, his hon. and learned Friend and the Prime Minister who are guilty of an abuse of the House.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is working himself up again. He will get the names. That is clear from my statement and from the action that my hon. and learned Friend has taken today. I endorse every word of the letter that my hon. and learned Friend wrote to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Kaufman: "Abuse"?

Mr. Hurd: If the right hon. Gentleman had contained his passion long enough to read to the end of that letter, he would have seen that my hon. and learned Friend was suggesting discussions.

Mr. Kaufman: Not last Thursday.

Mr. Hurd: That was one of the final points in the letter that he wrote yesterday. That is the point that I have been emphasising today and on which I should like to end.

I appeal to the right hon. Gentleman. I can see that he does not want this done through the usual channels because he thinks that procedure is too narrow. I have some sympathy with that view. We need to work out among ourselves a way in which the stop facility—which I am not trying to abolish, but which I am trying to bring within proportions—will work. I am trying to find a way in which we can discuss it on a parliamentary basis and make it work.

Mr. Speaker: Statement, Mr. Stanley.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the points of order after the statement. I can anticipate what the points of order are likely to be about.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): No, you cannot.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the points of order afterwards, as is my usual practice.

Mr. Faulds: No, this point of order has to do with this business.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it afterwards.

Later—

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall, Sir, that I was the Member—the hon. Member—*[Laughter.]* I wish that you could all say that about yourselves—to whom the original accusation was made that certain hon. Members had abused the immigration procedures. Yet I have listened to many hon. Members called to ask questions who have no concern with the immigration problem, including an hon. Member from some obscure point in the north of Scotland whose only connection with immigration could be occasional English visitors. The advice which is always available at your elbow and which is supposed to be totally impartial saw fit not to let you sight me on this matter. I think that it would be advisable—I say this, Sir, with the deep affection in which I hold you—to look again at the sense and rationality of postponing points of order which are relevant to the business under way until after other bits of business, which totally removes the relevance of the point of order. This is a major matter which should be re-examined, since I believe, Sir, it is a new development under your admirable Speakership.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: May I take one at a time? I sighted the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) earlier this afternoon and I sighted him yesterday. With the best will in the world, I cannot call every hon. Member every day. The hon. Member was called yesterday and I think that that was fair enough.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I assure you that my point of order has not lost its relevance because of any delay. I apologise for straining the patience of the House, but an important side issue has emerged from the exchanges about the immigration rules. It has been revealed that the Minister of State, Home Office, has written to 23 right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House asking for their permission to make public the correspondence that has passed between them and him. I assume that the correspondence will be made public by publication in *Hansard* or by copies being placed in the Library. However, the correspondence between an hon. Member and a Minister must be on the basis of confidentiality between the hon. Member and his constituent. No hon. Member has a right to reveal correspondence unless he has the explicit permission of the constituent to whom the correspondence refers.

Could I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is a very dangerous practice for Ministers of the Crown of any Government to come to the House and make an accusation about Members abusing their position and then defend that accusation by challenging them, on the following day, to allow him to publish the correspondence? I am glad that the Leader of the House has remained in his place, because this is a very serious intrusion into the way in which Members of Parliament carry out their work on behalf of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that that is really a point of order for me, but, as I understand it, what the Secretary of State said was that he would seek the permission of those hon. Members to whom he had written to publish the correspondence. That is what I understood him to say.

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that you are in an invidious position when it comes to the statement on immigration. My particular locality of north Bedfordshire has the highest immigrant population in the United Kingdom——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this not sound like an extension of Question Time?

Mr. Skeet: Not entirely, Mr. Speaker. *[Laughter.]* I am simply saying this, Mr. Speaker, and I want your guidance on it. When matters of this prominence come up and it is necessary for the Government possibly to bring in some code where they will have consultation with various Members — not only the 23 who have been nominated today—I think that it is only right that those Members who come from areas where there is a lot of evidence should have the opportunity to take part in that debate, which was referred to in the national press.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister, in the exchange over the immigration rules, repeated once more the insinuation and the allegation that a number of Members of Parliament have been acting improperly, and he now confirms that he has written to 23 of them. Presumably he will ensure that the names of those 23 will appear in *The Daily Telegraph* tomorrow. The issue, however, is that the Minister made a series of wholly unsubstantiated allegations against individual Members. He has failed to support those allegations with any detailed argument whatever this afternoon——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Corbyn: The point of order for you, Mr. Speaker, is this. Should not the Minister withdraw those allegations in their entirety? He is casting a slur on the character of individual Members of the House in the matter of the operation of the immigration laws.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, on which I look to you for guidance, is that the Minister is suggesting that he will write to those 23 and possibly seek discussions with them. Is that not a matter for the whole House, for public debate, rather than for private discussion among Members representing areas with a high proportion of immigrant people who are suffering disgracefully under the immigration laws?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for any statements or allegations that are made by any Member in the House, as long as they are in order.

Cyprus Service Men (Trial)

4.53 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the outcome of the trial concluded yesterday of eight service men under the Official Secrets Acts.

On 3 February 1984 a senior aircraftsman of 9 Signal Regiment based in Cyprus failed to complete unit clearance procedures prior to being posted back to the United Kingdom. On 6 February he was interviewed by the deputy unit security officer of the regiment. From this interview it appeared that a breach of security had occurred and the senior aircraftsman was arrested. His case was referred to the RAF provost and security service in Cyprus. Subsequently, the Army special investigations branch was also brought in since it appeared that soldiers as well as RAF personnel were involved. As is the standard procedure where a breach of the Offical Secrets Acts may have occurred, the Ministry of Defence security authorities brought the matter to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions during the course of their investigation.

On 15 March 1984, in view of the seriousness of the alleged breaches of security, the Director asked the Metropolitan police special branch to assume responsibility for the conduct of the investigation and in the light of its investigation he considered that the evidence justified prosecutions under the Official Secrets Acts. On 11 April the Attorney General consented to the prosecution of seven service men, who were charged on 13 April. The Attorney General subsequently consented to the prosecution of an eighth service man, who was charged on 8 June 1984.

As the House is aware, the service men charged have all been acquitted. Their future in the services will be determined in accordance with normal service regulations. These afford a right of appeal to the service boards, which include Ministers, before any final decision on their future is taken.

As the House is aware, the Security Commission reports to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. As my right hon. Friend stated to the House earlier today, she decided in June 1984 that, given the gravity of the apparent breaches of security and the length of time the trial proceedings would be likely to take, it would be right to make an immediate reference to the Security Commission. The reference was not announced at the time, so as not in any way to prejudice the course of justice. In the light of the acquittals, my right hon. Friend will consult the chairman of the Security Commission and report to the House in due course.

The House will wish to know of the steps that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has taken in the light of what has occurred. First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was first informed of the possibility of a breach of security on 10 February 1984. In the light of further information he decided that there should be an investigation of the security arrangements and procedures in 9 Signal Regiment which was to be led by the security service. In parallel with this investigation my right hon. Friend instructed that further investigations should be carried out into security procedures in all other static communications units of all three services which handle sensitive traffic. These security investigations produced a large number of detailed recommendations for

enhancing security at the units concerned. Most of them have been accepted, and either have been or are being implemented.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend has decided that there should be an independent inquiry into the way in which the service police carried out their investigations of the eight men originally accused. Mr. David Calcutt, QC, has agreed to conduct this inquiry and to complete it as quickly as is practical. He will start work next week. His terms of reference will be as follows:

"To inquire into the question of whether the investigations carried out by the Royal Air Force's provost marshal branch and the Army's special investigation branch into matters which formed the substance of charges subsequently laid under the Official Secrets Acts against SAC Geoffrey Jones, SAC Adam Lightowler, SAC Wayne Kriehn, SAC Christopher Payne, SAC Gwynn Owen, Lance Corporal Anthony Glass, Signalman Martin Tuffy, and Signalman David Hardman were carried out in accordance with lawful and proper procedures; to report with all practicable speed, and to make recommendations as to any relevant procedure."

Subject to the usual security considerations, it is my right hon. Friend's intention that Mr. Calcutt's report will be published.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Opposition are relieved that, on this occasion at least, the Ministry of Defence has reacted to the anger and outrage expressed on both sides of the House and outside at the revelations during the spy trial at the Old Bailey and in particular at the way in which confessions were extracted from defendants who were subsequently acquitted by a jury.

The Minister has announced the setting up of an inquiry and we welcome that. We shall scrutinise its powers and await its conclusions with interest. I remind the Minister and the House that this is the third occasion in little more than a year when prosecutions have been brought under the Official Secrets Acts emanating from activities within the Ministry of Defence and that on each occasion an Old Bailey jury has acquitted the defendants, and I remind the Minister that in this case the jury also rejected confessions extracted from the accused by investigators and interrogators at the Ministry of Defence.

Some fundamental questions remain which cannot be dealt with by the inquiry. In effect, they relate to ministerial responsibility within the Department for the prosecutions and also responsibility to the House. Who on earth at the Ministry of Defence was responsible for putting together a case which turned out to be so full of holes and based to a considerable extent on confessions extracted by means at best dubious and at worst barbaric?

Secondly, were the Minister and the Secretary of State at any time informed in their capacity as Ministers of the course of the investigations? Were they told about the interrogations? Did they know what was going on? Were they told the length of time for which the accused were interrogated and how long many of them were incarcerated? What were Ministers told about the inquiries while those inquiries were going on? Are we to believe that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, beavering away at his desk churning out all the answers for which he is famous, and the Secretary of State knew nothing whatever about the conduct of those investigations and interrogations? The House deserves to know exactly how much they knew about what was going on. Did no alarm bells ring when in a previous case another Cyprus service man was acquitted at the Old Bailey?

Thirdly, will the Minister explain the third paragraph of his statement, relating to the future of the service men involved? Will they have to go through another harrowing experience in terms of military discipline and procedures or are the Government prepared to accept the jury's verdict and to allow those service men to continue with their careers as they were doing before they were interrupted?

What thought has been given to compensation for the service men and for their families, who have also suffered, as those men's careers have clearly been blighted?

Finally, the Minister referred to the Security Commission. Has the Security Commission now cleared the security arrangements at that establishment in Cyprus?

Mr. Stanley: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has welcomed the setting up of the inquiry to be carried out by Mr. Calcutt. With regard to the conduct of the service police investigators, I suggest it would be much more proper to await the outcome of Mr. Calcutt's investigations and detailed inquiry before leaping to any conclusions on that. As for the responsibility for putting the case together, the decision to prosecute lies entirely with the Director of Public Prosecutions and the handling of the case is his responsibility.

The right hon. Gentleman asked whether Ministers were informed in detail about the questioning of those facing the accusations. The answer is that they were not. The established procedure in the Department is that judges' rules apply, and the central issue that Mr. Calcutt will be examining is whether those conducting the questioning did so in conformity with judges' rules.

As for the future of the service men involved, I made it clear in my statement that they will have every opportunity to be considered within the service regulations. It goes without saying that the Department fully accepts the verdict on the allegations which were subject to the judicial proceedings in relation to the Official Secrets Acts. It also made it clear that the service men have a right of appeal to service boards on which Ministers sit. Compensation is not and never has been available in such cases.

The right hon. Gentleman's question about the Security Commission is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I must ask the right hon. Gentleman to address it to her.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend accept that in the case of my constituent, Senior Aircraftsman Wayne Kriehn, the anger and bitterness of the young man's parents is deep and it is shared by many who know the boy in question? Does my right hon. Friend accept that in May 1984 I wrote to him passing on information given to me by the boy's parents that the confession had been extorted by interrogation in solitary confinement? Does he further accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and I wrote to the Secretary of State in August 1984 detailing our wider concern in the light of further talks with two of the prisoners? Given that background, does my right hon. Friend feel that there is a lesson to be learnt with regard to the continuing role of the services and the Ministry of Defence in looking after the welfare of service men awaiting trial in civil proceedings?

Looking to the future, will my right hon. Friend be a little more forthcoming about the opportunities now open to a man such as my constituent Wayne Kriehn, whom the

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

defending solicitor described as a high flier? Having put the matter to a civil court in preference to a court martial, it seems reasonable not to seek to reverse the process and attempt to try the people involved again.

Mr. Stanley: I assure my hon. Friend that there is no question of trying the individuals concerned in any other way in relation to the Official Secrets Acts. As for any other matters, I assure my hon. Friend that there is no contemplation of any further proceedings on the evidence available to us at the moment.

We are, of course, aware of the earlier correspondence and my hon. Friend rightly acknowledged that he was expressing the particular concerns that he described, but I am sure that he too will wish to await the conclusions of Mr. Calcutt's inquiry before reaching any final conclusion as to the validity of the complaints that were put to him.

On the wider policy issue of the continuing role of the services in being responsible for service men facing procedures in civilian courts, as the service men remain members of the services during that period I suggest that it is right that they should remain within a service environment and that the services should remain responsible for them. The crucial requirement is that they be afforded the same rights and protection as civilians in the same situation, and that is the object of the policy.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): There was no reference in the Minister's statement to any assistance having been sought from the Cypriot police authorities. Will the Minister explain why that was so? Is it true that the prosecution went ahead without any effort being made to ascertain whether any independent corroboration of the confessions was available in Cyprus? Secondly, is the Minister satisfied that no secrets have been lost in relation to the base in Cyprus, and does he accept that, even if he is satisfied, the House cannot be satisfied until there is parliamentary scrutiny of the security services?

Mr. Stanley: On the last point—this is as far as I can go—at the time of the original investigations it was the clear view of the Ministry of Defence security authorities that there was a real likelihood of a serious breach of security having occurred. That was the basis of the relevant papers being passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The decision to prosecute is, of course, entirely a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions in consultation with the Attorney-General and they were afforded full access to all the relevant information.

I cannot elaborate on the involvement of other agencies, but the hon. Member can be certain that all reasonable steps were taken to see whether there was any additional evidence in relation to the confessions made by the men.

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the main point is whether the alleged statements made by the defendants were voluntary? The jury's verdict says one of two things—that the jury was not satisfied that the statements were voluntary or that it was not satisfied beyond doubt that the statements were voluntary. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is now considerable public anxiety about this issue and that the manner in which he proposes to resolve this matter by setting up an inquiry is the most effective way of dealing with this problem?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his remarks. He has rightly addressed the nub of the case. He will understand that it would be improper for me to comment on how the jury arrived at their conclusions. I should like warmly to endorse his remarks about the inquiry we are setting up. It must be the correct response to the allegations which have been made. I am certain that Mr. Calcutt's inquiry will produce a proper and independent view of the validity of those allegations.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): What will Mr. David Calcutt's powers be when conducting the inquiry? Will he be confined to examining what happened in the five weeks between 6 February 1984 and 15 March 1984 when the Metropolitan police took responsibility for the case? Will he inquire into whether full details of the incarceration and the length of the interrogation were made available to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney-General when the decision to prosecute was taken?

Mr. Stanley: When the right hon. and learned Member examines the terms of reference closely, he will see——

Mr. John Morris: The powers.

Mr. Stanley: Yes. Mr. Calcutt's powers initially rest on the terms of reference. They are widely drawn. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that this is a non-statutory inquiry. Mr. Calcutt will of course have the full support of the Law Officers and the Ministry of Defence to ensure that he has access to all the available information.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the issue here is not the mere fact of the acquittals? It would be wrong to suggest that a criminal trial is unsuccessful simply because there is an acquittal. If the speculation that has appeared in today's quality press is true, and is substantiated, it means that people such as my constituent Mr. Geoffrey Jones have been placed in great jeopardy for a long time on the basis of confessions which are not just marginally inadmissible but wholly unsubstantiated. If Mr. Calcutt's inquiry shows that that was the quality of the confessions extracted, the House will expect an assurance that such a set of events can never be repeated.

Mr. Stanley: I agree with my hon. Friend that if the allegations should be substantiated by Mr. Calcutt's inquiry, that will be a serious matter. I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety, which I am sure is shared on both sides of the House. If such matters were proved, we would have to take all possible steps to ensure that there was no repetition of the circumstances.

I should like to repeat what I said previously: I am sure that the House would not wish to reach any conclusion until both sides of the case have been heard and the allegations have for the first time been subjected to detailed independent scrutiny.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): A new independent prosecuting service will shortly take over from the police, with the power to institute prosecutions in court in England and Wales. Will that new procedure apply to the police in the RAF, the Army and the Royal Navy? Will the right hon. Gentleman point out to his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that those young RAF technicians, working at an outstation of GCHQ, were not members of a trade union?

Mr. Stanley: The independent prosecution service will not impinge on proceedings relating to the armed services. I can assure the right hon. Member that, under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, we are bound to produce codes of guidance about questioning, and that is relevant to the case we are discussing. Those codes will ensure that our procedures conform with those adopted in civilian courts. We regard that as an essential policy requirement.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that those proceedings were instituted in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Attorney General and that the proper legal processes were followed? Will my right hon. Friend squash the nonsensical suggestion that those proceedings should never have been brought?

Mr. Stanley: I understand that that is the case as far as my Department is concerned. I should like to make it clear that in matters such as this, where there is an alleged serious breach of the Official Secrets Acts, there is an obligation on my Department to submit the relevant papers to the Director of Public Prosecutions. This is not a matter where we have discretion, and the papers automatically go to the Director of Public Prosecutions in such cases in accordance with the rules which have been laid down.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In reference to the last question, does the Minister agree that the inquiry should be broadened to include the decision-making process? The Minister told the House that the decision originated with the Air Force provost marshal. It then went to the Army investigation branch which sent it to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who sent it to the special branch, who returned it to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who finally sent it to the Attorney General, whose guidelines then became involved. Is there not a defect in a decision-making process which allows eight service men to be charged and brought to the Old Bailey on the flimsiest and most insubstantial evidence, which the jury must then consider? Is that not an appropriate subject for inquiry?

Mr. Stanley: I do not think that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) can fairly come to the conclusion that there is a defect in the procedures — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Because, until Mr. Calcutt has reached his conclusions, there is no possible justification for saying that. The House must appreciate that it is a fundamental responsibility of all three services and of defence Ministers to take the necessary procedural and administrative steps to ensure that the classified and highly sensitive material with which many service men are involved is properly protected. Where breaches of security may have occurred, it is important that there is a procedure clearly laid down for bringing the appropriate cases rapidly to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions. There is nothing in this case which makes us feel anxious that the procedure was not followed.

It is essential that where the armed services' security authorities decide that a serious breach of security may have taken place and that there is a potentially serious breach of the Official Secrets Acts, the relevant papers are drawn to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Should not all concerned have justice? Have not the investigators been condemned outside the court, on the basis of no certain information, for using Gestapo methods? Do the rules of the service allow those investigators to take legal action to defend themselves if they so wish?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend made an entirely fair and necessary point in his opening remarks. Some of the statements made in relation to service police in advance of the independent assessment of the allegations have been quite unjustified, and any such criticisms should await the conclusion of the Calcutt inquiry. That is elementary, fair and necessary justice. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that the service police investigators are just as entitled to a fair and independent hearing as anybody else.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Are any secret documents or codes still missing?

Mr. Stanley: At the time of the original allegations, it was clear to the security authorities in the services that a serious breach of security appeared to have occurred. That included the apparent loss of documents. I can say nothing more on that.

Mr. Dalyell: Are they still missing?

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will go a long way to stilling the apprehensions of many hon. Members on both sides of the House, and will be welcomed by all except those who would make political mischief out of this unhappy case?

Mr. Stanley: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Adverting to the question of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) will the Minister tell the House what powers Mr. David Calcutt will have — I repeat the word "powers" — if his investigations are to be thorough and complete? Are those powers to include the power to summon witnesses to take evidence on oath or to grant immunity? Surely, failure to give Mr. Calcutt such powers would render his investigation abortive. Does not the Minister agree that the case shows the great danger of allowing prosecutions to be brought on the basis of interrogation rather than collected and substantiated independent evidence?

Mr. Stanley: I understand that Mr. Calcutt will have power to take evidence on oath, but not power to compel the taking of evidence on oath. Immunity is a separate matter that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be considering with Mr. Calcutt.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): My right hon. Friend will no doubt agree that in most Communist countries people who confess are never acquitted, and this case is a triumph of our system. Will not my right hon. Friend consider that regulations ought to be passed, closely following the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, to safeguard the accused persons, and to make sure that this does not happen again? The regulations should not follow only the evidential points, but should cover as wide a spectrum as possible.

Mr. Stanley: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's first point, that the mere fact of an acquittal is not a matter of criticism under British justice. That matter seems to have been forgotten by some. There are specific provisions

[Mr. Stanley]

in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act that make it necessary for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to publish codes to ensure that service men facing criminal charges will have the same protection as civilians in questioning and related areas.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Will the Minister deal with a specific point? Were the confessions of the service men ruled inadmissible by the trial judge? Upon being acquitted, did the defendants make an application for costs? Does the Minister appreciate that Mr. David Calcutt's inquiry is welcome, but it must take a certain amount of time, and in the intervening period, the acquitted defendants' service careers and reputation are in jeopardy? The Minister seems to imply by innuendo that being acquitted is not the same as innocence; therefore there is a continual slur upon the reputations of those defendants.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman's last comment is wholly wrong. I believe I made it clear that those men have have been found innocent, and that verdict is totally accepted by Ministers and by the armed services. I give the clearest possible assurance on that point. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, in the case of one service man the confession was ruled inadmissible on the grounds of the medical condition of the service man. The confessions of the remaining seven service men were not ruled inadmissible by the judge.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall allow questions upon this important matter to continue for a further five minutes. We have a very heavy day in front of us.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Minister give us some idea of what particular skill Mr. David Calcutt has in evaluating interrogation techniques involving duress and psychological techniques? Will he give us an assurance that the people who undertook the investigations in Cyprus and elsewhere will be suspended from duty pending Mr. Calcutt's report?

Mr. Stanley: There is no present intention to suspend any of the individuals concerned. That would not be a proper way to proceed in advance of the independent inquiry. Mr. David Calcutt is an extremely eminent silk. He is a former chairman of the Bar, and recently carried out the inquiry into the Falklands hospital fire. I think he is an appropriate person to conduct the investigation.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that in the outcome of this and previous cases neither he nor his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will flinch from taking the necessary action where a grievous haemorrhage of national security is thought to have taken place? May I assure him that he continues to enjoy the confidence of the House and many people outside in the sensitive way in which he has to make those judgments? Will he also take this opportunity to assure the Government and the people of Cyprus that the circumstances surrounding this case in no way undermine the confidence and friendship that we have for them in the common defence of our freedom?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I assure him that defence Ministers and other Ministers take their security responsibilities very seriously; they are a continuing obligation on us. We enjoy a close friendship with Cyprus and good relations with the Cypriot Government, and I am certain that these events will not impair that in any way.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the jury system, as the only shield against injustice, was never better vindicated than in this case; and that in serious matters like this, military tribunals are not effective? The service men would almost certainly have been found guilty under that system. Will my right hon. Friend reconsider compensation? I believe that most of us think that to be charged with treason is possibly worse than being charged with murder, particularly in the armed forces. Bearing in mind that those men and their families have suffered for 22 months, does he not agree that it is ludicrous to think that those men may want to stay in the forces which, bluntly, have treated them so badly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) pointed out? My right hon. Friend says that this has never been done before, but I do not believe that there has been a greater injustice than what took place over the past 22 months in this case. Should we not repay something for 22 months of injustice?

Mr. Stanley: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's opening remarks, and all of us in the House endorse the jury system. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the correctness of ensuring that those proceedings were tried in the civilian courts. In the totality of jurisdiction there are many acquittals, but compensation in this case would raise wide issues which would have to be dealt with by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As a former military policeman, I think that the important question is whether lawful procedures were followed. Section 75(1) of the Air Force Act 1955 gives protection to airmen against unnecessary delays in the criminal investigation of offences. If that section is found wanting, will the Minister assure the House that, when new primary legislation on military discipline is introduced, this and associated rights will be strengthened in the interests of young service men?

Mr. Stanley: I am sure that the House is grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the benefit of his relevant experience. The question whether correct procedures were followed is central to Mr. Calcutt's inquiry. There can be no final answer on that matter until he produces his report. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if the report's conclusions suggest changes in procedures, the matter will be examined closely, because our objective is that service men facing charges should have the same protection as civilians.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my right hon. Friend find time to discuss with the Solicitor-General what happens when several defendants are on trial together? The abuse of the right of peremptory challenge of jurors can mean the introduction of bias into our courts instead of its removal.

Mr. Stanley: I think that my hon. Friend will understand tht that important point is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Can the Minister make a couple of factual observations which do not affect the inquiry? Were the original investigating officers in the case of the Cyprus seven the same officers who investigated the case of Paul Davies?

Secondly, will the Minister confirm that Mr. Costas Elenas, who was referred to throughout the trial, undertook to act as a witness, but that the Attorney-General was not prepared to give him immunity against prosecution in Britain? The Minister has not been forthcoming on the powers of the tribunal. Will witnesses get immunity from prosecution when they appear before judges? Will the evidence be taken on oath? Will witnesses be compelled to come forward and give evidence on oath? Will protection be given to members of the services who give evidence, so that their careers will not be prejudiced in any way?

Regarding ministerial responsibility, the Opposition find it hard to accept that Ministers who have prosecuted Pontin, Paul Davies and now the Cyprus seven did not know what was going on. They should have seen the warning lights about discrepancies that were likely to appear and that there would be a powerful case for the defence in confessions taken under duress.

Regardless of the Prime Minister's concerns, is the Minister convinced that security in Cyprus is now secure — or, following the acquittal, are we looking for somebody else?

Mr. Stanley: As I said in my statement, as soon as this case came to light, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly initiated an exhaustive study of the security procedures in Cyprus and related establishments worldwide. Recommendations arising from detailed investigations have been accepted and have been or are being implemented. No one can express absolute confidence in security, because any security is vulnerable. That is self-evident. I believe that my right hon. Friend has taken the correct steps. A number of changes in security have been made. We have done our utmost to prevent a repetition of this case.

I do not know whether the investigators involved in the earlier proceedings were also involved in this case. I will be happy to look into the matter and give the hon. Gentleman that information. Immunity for witnesses must be a matter for the Attorney General. I have already dealt with taking evidence on oath and with immunity. I made it clear that the question of immunity will be discussed between Mr. Calcutt and the Attorney General.

Board and Lodging (Regulations)

5.42 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said a little earlier that we had a heavy day ahead of us. There seems some prospect that the day might be lightened if the Government were not to move the social security regulations relating to board and lodging payments. Since the Leader of the House is present, perhaps you could give him the opportunity to assist the House. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Joint Committee reported that these regulations may be ultra vires, and the Department is aware that they may be ultra vires. Rather than having the prospect of the Government shooting themselves in the foot again later tonight, can we have the position made clear?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): That was a most helpful intervention on the part of the hon. Gentleman. My right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General met the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments this afternoon to discuss the effect and meaning of the draft board and lodging regulations. Following this meeting, I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend wishes to give further consideration to some of the points raised by the Committee. In these circumstances, the Government do not believe that it would be right to ask the House to debate these regulations tonight.

Access to Personal Files

5.43 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide access for private individuals to information relating to themselves maintained by certain authorities, institutions and persons; to allow individuals to obtain copies of, and require corrections to be made to, such information; and to provide for the enforcement of these provisions.

The House will be aware that a similar Bill was before us as recently as last Session. In July 1984 the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) introduced a measure in very similar terms. This Bill, as did that, has all-party support. This Bill, as did that, will no doubt fall when the House is prorogued tomorrow afternoon.

The sponsors of the Bill have deliberately sought to draw the attention of the House to this measure on the last day of the parliamentary Session. This is done on the basis that it has merits which are unique and on which I hope to address the House briefly in a moment. We also seek to highlight opportunities in the forthcoming ballots for private Members' Bills, bringing with them, as they do automatically, the parliamentary time required to translate any such Bill to the statute book. Statutory provision for putting this Bill on the statute book is the goal of the sponsors, and nothing less will do.

If I did not run the risk of straying out of order, Mr. Speaker, I would spend the rest of my 10 minutes engaging in a commercial or a trailer for the private Members' ballot, because this Bill is unique in as much as it is achievable, it is non-controversial and a lot of time has been spent in making it such. It would have a profound impact in changing attitudes to secrecy in this country, and it would have widespread support. If it found favour this afternoon, the Bill would be in a printed form.

The timing of the measure is particularly appropriate. It is the next most obvious step in the whole campaign for freedom of information, which it would be in the interests of the country to achieve.

The need for the Bill is urgent and self-evident. Two major problems currently arise. Factual errors can be made, sometimes caused by carelessness, and at other times made in good faith. However the errors are generated, they can result in Executive action and administrative decisions leading to quite inappropriate treatment, in a health context, or other equally serious personal injustices.

The most recent example that has come to my notice was the tragic death of four-year-old Jasmine Beckford, where it became clear in the subsequent inquiry that the report on the foster parents, when Jasmine Beckford was taken from them, was quite inaccurate and may have contributed to the decision by the social work department to return her to her stepfather and natural mother. Alternatively, situations can arise where information of a highly subjective or speculative nature or pure opinion can be included in a file which, if promulgated unchallenged, can cause distress and damage which can be prejudicial to individuals. As an example, health records may contain comments such as "Doesn't like doctors." This health record pursues the person throughout his medical history and can have unfortunate and unjustified results.

There have been some encouraging signs. Some of these problems are being recognised in some quarters. Some authorities and professional bodies already actively encourage a policy of free access, and the results of this experience, such as have been reported, are wholly beneficial. The experience reported from other countries which operate a policy of free access is also wholly encouraging. The House should study with care the results of the introduction of free access in America, where a staggeringly high number of reported errors and inaccuracies was found when the policy was introduced.

Our Government have, in a limited way, introduced systems which allow some access in certain situations. For example, the Housing Act 1980 means that housing applications are now covered to some extent. There is also the Education Act 1981 and the DHSS circular of 1983 on guidance to social work authorities. These are all encouraging and very welcome signs.

The Bill will also redress the anomaly that will exist in November 1987 after the full implementation of the Data Protection Act, which creates a statutory right of access to electronically but not manually stored information. We shall then be in the ridiculous position that if a person lives in a part of the country where records are stored electronically he can have access, but if they are not so stored he is denied access.

The powers of the Bill allow an individual to discover whether certain records are held, allow for the supply of copies of any records, allow inaccuracies to be corrected, allow individuals to seek compensation where damage or distress can be proved to have flowed from errors, and allow recourse to the courts if the authority holding the information fails to comply with the law.

The Bill embraces the principal public authorities providing services to the public. This includes health authorities, individual doctors, education authorities, social work departments, any credit agencies that keep records of the ratings of an individual and certain administration of justice records, and authorities whose duties include the administration of benefits, grants and other types of assistance to the public.

The restriction to these public authorities is a deliberate compromise. Some sponsors would like the Bill to be much more widely drawn, but it is deliberately limited to enhance the prospects of wider acceptance, and therefore increase the chances of its getting on to the statute book.

The important part of that compromise, and the important exceptions built into the Bill, can be briefly stated. They are that information will not be released when it involves the privacy of any other person, when it reveals the identity of someone who gave information on a confidential basis, when someone other than the applicant might be subjected to physical harm as a result of the release of the information, or when, in a few cases, it is the opinion of a doctor that it could cause mental distress to a patient. Finally, information will not be released when it would breach established legal, professional privileges.

The Bill is well thought out and properly drafted. I pay tribute to the work being done by the Campaign for Freedom of Information, which is widely respected and straddles all strands of opinion in the country, political and otherwise, and which has done a great deal of work. The past 18 months have been spent in extremely thorough consultation with the interested parties and in winning over some of the professional bodies which originally had

doubts about the Bill. It is a highly popular issue with the public, and therefore it is extremely unlikely that it would be actively opposed by the Government.

We need access as of right to information recorded about ourselves, and we need the right to ensure that such information is both fair and correct. The legislation to create those rights will do more to enhance the quality of our democracy and redress the balance between the administrative arm of government and the individual than almost any other Bill that could be introduced by a Back-Bench Member. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will give the Bill careful consideration when the private Members' ballot is held. I hope that the Bill will find favour with the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Robin Corbett, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. Steve Norris, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Donald Stewart, Mr. James Wallace and Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

Access to Personal Files

Mr. Archy Kirkwood accordingly presented a Bill to provide access for private individuals to information relating to themselves maintained by certain authorities, institutions and persons; to allow individuals to obtain copies of, and require corrections to be made to, such information; and to provide for the enforcement of these provisions:

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill No. 214.]

Transport Bill (Allocation of Time)

5.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Order of the House [1st April] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 1st April, shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of the Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment disignated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first consideration of Lords Amendments

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

4. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the remaining Lords Proposals.

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

Supplemental

5. — (1) In this paragraph 'the proceedings' means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or, as the case may be, for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question of any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

I hope that we shall not spend long debating the motion, and will instead move swiftly to considering the amendments to the Bill that have come from the other place.

The vast majority of the amendments are purely drafting and technical, but a significant number make important and constructive changes, notably the additional provisions to ensure that the interests of elderly and disabled passengers receive due attention. These amendments, and more of the other substantive amendments, were initiated by the Opposition or by Back-Bench Members of the other place. We tried wherever possible to respond positively where we felt that amendments were genuinely seeking to improve the Bill rather than to undermine its fundamental principles. I said before the Second Reading that we wanted to fashion a better Bill, and these amendments go towards achieving that.

Last night, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) did not know whether to attack the amendments or to welcome them. I can understand her dilemma, because the amendments reinforce the Bill, whereas she simply wishes to wreck it. True to form, the Opposition have tabled a number of amendments, some of which raise again the fundamental issues of policy underlying the Bill. I shall be disappointed if the Opposition choose to waste time today on the motion, rather than getting on with considering the issues.

This is a long and complex Bill, but, despite the guillotine, it has received very thorough consideration by Parliament. In this House alone, the time spent so far amounts to some 174 hours. In the other place, the Bill received some 70 hours of debate, and there were some 20 Divisions. The supplement to the order will ensure that we have a further 4 hours of debate this evening. I know that a large number of amendments have been accepted for debate. It is a bit hard to respond to the Opposition by being flexible and accepting amendments and then to be accused, as I was last night, of not having prepared the Bill properly.

It is time that the Bill was on the statute book. It puts the customer first, by removing unnecessary restrictions over competition between operators. It applies to the bus industry the market approach that is regarded as perfectly normal, and indeed vital, in most other sectors of the economy. Urgent action is needed to stem the sorry pattern of declining patronage, rising costs and escalating subsidy. No Government could sit on their hands and allow the decline to continue. That would not be in the interests of passengers and it would certainly not be in the interests of the industry and those who work in it.

It was in July last year that we set out in the White Paper our reasons for believing that customers on local bus services now deserve the same benefits as passengers on express services have enjoyed since 1980. We consulted widely on the White Paper and we brought forward a Bill, dealing not just with deregulation, but providing for a comprehensive package of measures to enable competition to operate fairly, within a stable framework of safety controls and financial support for socially desirable services. The Bill has now received the fullest possible examination by Parliament over a period of nine months.

Operators and local authorities have much to do between now and deregulation day on 26 October next year to prepare for the new system. The order will ensure that the House has the opportunity to decide at a reasonable hour this evening the last few remaining issues to be resolved. The Bill can then complete its final stages and the industry, and those who work with it, can get on with the task of making the transition to deregulation. The time for arguing is coming to an end, and the time for action is about to begin.

5.58 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is instructive to look carefully at the Bill that we are now hurrying on to the statute book with the aid of a timetable motion. It will initiate a revolution not just in local public transport but in parliamentary procedure, and the results of the experiments prove that there should be no repetition of the methods used by the Secretary of State.

The Government have a manifesto commitment to more competition in the bus industry, and that was taken as justification for ignoring the whole of the normal consultation procedures. The White Paper on buses, published in July 1984, was written without any of the normal discussions and in a form that made it difficult for people to respond easily to it. There were 7,000 respondents. They were required to let the Department have their views during the two summer months. That shows the depth of anger that this extraordinary legislation has aroused.

It is interesting to note that only a handful of the 7,000 who responded supported the Government's plans. One of their supporters, from the Adam Smith Institute, was a bankrupt bus operator. That there were 7,000 replies shows the depth of anger aroused by the Bill. When it was published in February 1985 it was found that bus substitution had been added to the original legislation, yet this had been discussed only in a Green Paper that applied to Wales. This was to become law on the basis of no real examination of its implications for the whole of the United Kingdom.

The Government showed how much interest they have in informed discussion through their choice of Committee members. Many Tory Members of Parliament who are known to have an interest in transport were deliberately excluded. Committee membership was top heavy with Parliamentary Private Secretaries and the most junior Members of the House. The Government's fear of open debate went even further. They refused to wait until the

Select Committee report on buses was published, although they were aware that it was a detailed and useful examination of an enormous lacuna in this legislation. The Government went further still by making personal attacks on the Chairman of the Select Committee, a most valued and highly independent Member of Parliament whom we shall miss very much indeed.

The Committee stage began on 21 February. By April fool's day—94 debating hours and one non-Government amendment later—the Government asked, for the first time, for the imposition of the guillotine. Only 11 clauses had been debated. The only non-Government amendment made at that stage was the reduction in the retirement age for traffic commissioners from 70 to 65. By 7 May the Committee stage was completed, after another 55 hours of debate—a total of 150 hours of discussion. During that time the Government allowed two non-Conservative amendments——

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Dunwoody: They allowed rail and ferry travel to remain within the concessionary fares rules, including the change to which I have already referred.

Then the Government allowed Tory Back Benchers to stage probably the most phoney rebellion that one has ever seen in a Committee. To say that it was ill rehearsed is to put it mildly. Suddenly we were told that no longer would the public be allowed to object to the issue of public service vehicle licences when operators were thought to be unsuitable by the customer. Later the Government repented and introduced a very much amended and weaker version which still excludes the general public and includes only local authorities and the police. The Government were clearly terrified of allowing the general public to have a say. Therefore, they decided to remove that aspect from the legislation. By that stage the Government had amended their Bill no fewer than 122 times.

Mr. Forth *rose——*

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Report stage on 22 May made the new parliamentary procedure much clearer. During the two days of debate the Government blocked all 17 amendments from Opposition Members, but 138 Government amendments and 13 new clauses were passed. The Government used the House as a departmental drafting body. Although hon. Members were allowed to vent their anger, they were outvoted. The tidying up of the Government's unformed schemes went ahead unaffected. The result was that 13 hours of debate produced more change than the 150 hours of detailed discussion. The Government could not have shown more clearly their deep contempt for the House of Commons as a place of debate and enlightenment.

Mr. Forth *rose——*

Mrs. Dunwoody: In July the Government proved that they could go one better. The other place debated the Bill in Committee for six days. Well over 300 amendments were discussed—mainly Government amendments. The same drafting method was applied in another place. On Report in another place between 14 and 17 October the drafting system was used to deal with over 400 amendments—again, tabled mainly by the Government. Finally, on 24 October, on Third Reading in another place, there were still 86 amendments to be dealt with. The Government made 420 amendments to their Bill during its passage in another place, but only one non-Government amendment was accepted. It watered down the effect of the Tory rebellion in Committee in this place.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I shall give way in a moment.

During the nine months in which the Bill has been debated in Parliament, the Government have amended it 680 times and added over 30 new clauses. However, they have not made the slightest gesture in the direction of the views of the general public, of anybody involved in the transport industry or of the local authorities which will be most directly involved.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Does the hon. Lady accept that many of the Government amendments were tabled in response to points raised either in Committee or after consultation with local authorities, bus operators and others in the industry?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I do not. If one looks at the number of amendments that the Government are still trying to write into the Bill, one finds that many of them arise not from changes of principle — certainly not from consultations, which this Secretary of State does not understand in any practical way—but from the fact that the Bill was badly drafted and ill conceived. It should not have been introduced in this Session of Parliament. There should have been consultation on a Green Paper.

We are dealing with one of the greatest changes in public transport in 50 years, yet the Secretary of State has followed no real consultation procedure. He has rejected the normal parliamentary procedures. Instead of legislation being introduced with a view to considering the reaction of hon. Members, the legislative procedure has been turned into a sham in a ruthless attempt to save time. The only real discussion that was allowed took place in the Department. The House has been regarded as a very minor step in the presentation of the Secretary of State's views —or perhaps I should say his prejudices. He knows that he has been found wanting by the courts of this land. I shall not refer to his theft of £50 million from the Greater London council for London Regional Transport. Consultation is an important aspect when framing legislation. I remind the Secretary of State——

Mr. Ridley *rose——*

Mrs. Dunwoody: I shall give way in a moment to the Secretary of State.

I remind the Secretary of State of a point made by the judge when one case was brought before the courts. It was pointed out to the Secretary of State that consultation means more than simply telling people what will be done. When he consults the House, he must be willing to listen to the arguments. The fact that 680 amendments were made, only two of which were Opposition amendments, shows how little the Secretary of State has learnt. About 1,700 amendments were tabled. The Secretary of State can congratulate himself upon the fact that no real account has been taken of the views of the general public or of anybody who recognises how vital public transport is to the people of this country. I congratulate him upon having acted in an unacceptable way. He has behaved in an even more arrogant fashion than is his wont.

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 186.

Division No. 305] **[6.10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John

Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robin Corbett and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [1st April] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 1st April, shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above——

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of the Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment disignated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first consideration of Lords Amendments

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of the proceedings.

4. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

5. — (1) In this paragraph 'the proceedings' means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or, as the case may be, for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question of any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Orders of the Day

Transport Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

LOCAL SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2 line 35, at end insert—

("(5) Subsections (5)(*b*)(*c*) and (6) of section 1 of the 1981 Act (meaning of "fares") shall apply for the purposes of this section.")

6.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this we shall discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 53, in clause 26, page 26, line 35, leave out "the 1981" and insert "that".

No. 54, in clause 26, page 26, line 38, leave out "the 1981" and insert "that".

No. 296, in schedule 1, page 120 line 3, at end insert—

"*The Transport Act* 1968

1. In section 159(1) of the Transport Act 1968 (interpretation)—

(a) for the definition of "bus service" there shall be substituted the following—

"'bus service' means a local service other than one on which the passengers travel together on a journey, with or without breaks, from one or more places to one or more places and back"; and

(b) the following definition shall be inserted at the appropriate place—

"'local service' has the same meaning as in the Transport Act 1985;"".

No. 297, in schedule 1, page 120, line 10, leave out from beginning to "to", in line 12, and insert—

"3.—(1) Paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Energy Act 1976 (relaxation of road traffic and transport law) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1), for the words from "any", where it first occurs,".

No. 298, in schedule 1, page 120, line 15, leave out "and" and insert—

"(3) In sub-paragraph (1),".

No. 299, in schedule 1, page 120, line 20, at end insert—

"(4) In sub-paragraph (1)(*c*) the words "or Part III" shall be omitted and after "1981" there shall be inserted the words "or Part I or II of the Transport Act 1985".

(5) In sub-paragraph (2), the words "section 60 of", and the words from "general" to first "vehicles", shall be omitted and after "1981" there shall be inserted "or Part I of the Transport Act 1985".".

No. 300, in schedule 1, page 120, line 42, at end insert—

"6A. In section 53(1) of that Act (payment of expenses), for the words "II or III" there shall be substituted the words "or II"".

No. 301, in schedule 1, page 121, line 10, after "*(a)*" insert "of that Act".

No. 302, in schedule 1, page 122, line 29, at end insert "the provisions of".

No. 303, in schedule 1, page 122, line 36, at end insert—

"14.—(1) Subject to any provision made by or under this Act, in any enactment or instrument passed or made before the commencement of section 1 of this Act—

(a) any reference to a stage carriage service shall be construed as a reference to a local service;

(b) any reference to an express carriage service shall be construed as a reference to any service for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward at separate fares which is neither a local service nor one provided by a vehicle to which sub-paragraph (2) below applies;

(c) any reference to a stage carriage shall be construed as a reference to a public service vehicle being used in the provision of a local service;

(d) any reference to an express carriage shall be construed as a reference to a public service vehicle being used to carry passengers for hire or reward at separate fares other than one being used in the provision of a local service; and

(e) any reference to a contract carriage shall be construed as a reference to a public service vehicle being used to carry passengers for hire or reward otherwise than at separate fares.

(2) When used in circumstances in which the conditions set out in Part III of Schedule 1 to the 1981 Act are fulfilled, a public service vehicle carrying passengers at separate fares shall be treated, for the purposes of any enactment or instrument to which paragraph *(d)* or *(e)* of sub-paragraph (1) above applies, as being used to carry passengers otherwise than at separate fares.".

No. 307, in schedule 2, page 139, line 21, at end insert—

"The Transport Act 1968

1.—(1) The Transport Act 1968 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 96(10)*(b)*, there shall be substituted for the words "commissioners or licensing authority" the word "commissioner" and for the words "commissioners or authority think" the words "commissioner thinks".

(3) In section 98(3), there shall be substituted for the words "commissioners or licensing authority" in both places the word "commissioner" and for the words "commissioners or authority think" the words "commissioner thinks".

(4) In section 99, there shall be substituted for the words "commissioners or licensing authority" in subsections (1) and (8) the word "commissioner".

(5) In section 103(5), for the words "commissioners or licensing authority" there shall be substituted the word "commissioner".

No. 368, in schedule 6, page 146, line 6, leave out from "services" to end of line 7.

No. 377, in schedule 6, page 148, line 21, leave out sub-paragraph (6).

No. 397, in schedule 7, page 151, line 22, column 3, at end insert—

		"In section 103(1), the definition of "licensing authority".".

No. 398, in schedule 7, page 151, line 24, column 3, leave out "definition of "area bus service"" and insert—

		"definitions of the following expressions— "area bus service"; excursion or tour"; express carriage" and "stage carriage"; and "road service licence"."

No. 403, in schedule 7, page 152, line 12, at end insert—

"1976 c. 76.	The Energy Act 1976.	In Schedule 1, in paragraph 1(1)*(c)* the words "or Part III" and "and", paragraph 1(1)*(d)* and in paragraph 1(2) the words "section 60 of" and the words from "general" to first "vehicles"."

No. 404, in schedule 7, page 152, line 17, at end insert—

"1980 c. 34	The Transport Act 1980	In Schedule 5, in Part II, the paragraph amending the Transport Act 1968."

No. 408, in schedule 7, page 152, line 43, column 3, at end insert—

		"In section 53(1), the words "the" before the words "traffic commissioners" and the words "or section 45".".

Mr. Ancram: This is a group of consequential and drafting amendments. Their most important purpose is to bring the terminology of the Transport Act 1968, the Energy Act 1976 the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 into line with that of the Bill, and to provide that phrases such as "stage carriage" in previous legislation, including local and subordinate legislation, have a continuing meaning.

The amendment to clause 2 ensures that separate "fares" in that clause has the same meaning as in section 2 of the 1981 Act, thus preventing the evasion of registration by bogus free services.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3

TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 3, line 2, leave out "section" and insert "sections".

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 3, in page 3, line 31, at end insert—

"5.—(1) Every traffic commissioner shall publish, in such form and at such times as may be prescribed, such information with respect to the exercise, or proposed exercise, of any of his functions under this Act or the Transport Act 1985 as may be prescribed.

(2) Where the traffic commissioner for a traffic area publishes information under this section he shall—

(a) send a copy of the publication—

(i) to every chief officer of police, Passenger Transport Executive and local authority whose area falls partly or wholly within that traffic area; and

(ii) where that traffic area falls wholly or partly within London, to London Regional Transport; and

(b) make a copy of it available (by post if required and on payment of such fee as may be prescribed) to anyone who asks for one.

(3) In this section "local authority" means—

(a) in England and Wales, the council of any non-metropolitan county, any district or London borough or the Common Council of the City of London; and

(b) in Scotland, any regional or islands council.".

No. 11, in clause 6, page 7, line 5, leave out from first "to" to second "the".

No. 13, in clause 6, page 7, line 25, leave out subsection (9) and (10).

No. 20, in clause 7, page 9, line 33, leave out subsection (15).

No. 270, in clause 110, page 109, line 38, after "Act" insert—

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

"*(b)* traffic regulation conditions determined under section 7 of this Act;"

No. 321, in schedule 2, page 127, line 27, leave out from "or" to end of line 30.

No. 378, in schedule 6, page 148, line 23, at end insert—

"(7A) In section 56(1) (records of licences etc.) there shall be added, at the end, the words "and shall allow the record to be inspected at all reasonable times by members of the public"."

No. 409, in schedule 7, page 152, line 44, column 3, leave out "(1)" and insert "in subsection (1)"

No. 410, in schedule 7, page 152, line 45, column 3, at end insert "and subsection (2)"

Mr. Ancram: These amendments put the traffic commissioners' publication "Notice and Proceedings" on a statutory footing, and remove the separate and then redundant requirement for the Traffic Commissioners to send details of registrations to local authorities and the police. The amendment provides for the content of notices and proceedings to be specified in regulations. It will cover registrations, traffic regulation conditions and applications for operators' licences, among other things. It will be provided free to local authorities and the police, and will be a general sale. The group also includes amendments simplifying and codifying the requirement on the traffic commissioners to keep records of licences, traffic regulations and so on, and make them available to members of the public.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

INQUIRIES HELD BY TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 4, line 17, at end insert—

"(4A) Where a traffic commissioner holds an inquiry he may, in such circumstances as may be prescribed and subject to any provision made under subsection (4B) below, make such order as he thinks fit as to the payment, by such party to the inquiry as he thinks fit, of costs incurred by him or by the Secretary of State in connection with the holding of the inquiry.

(4B) Regulations may make provision, in relation to orders under subsection (4A) above, as to—

(a) the method of calculating the amount of any costs incurred as mentioned in that subsection; and

(b) the maximum amount which may be ordered to be paid under such an order.

(4C) Any amount so ordered to be paid by any person may be recoverable from him—

(a) in England and Wales, as a debt due to the Crown; or

(b) in Scotland, by the Secretary of State.".

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment gives the traffic commissioner a power to award costs, which will be used to deter delaying tactics and similar abuses, for instance by people called before him for possible disciplinary action.

The amendment gives power to the commissioner to recover only his costs, and those of the Department in providing accommodation and clerical assistance for an inquiry. It does not enable the commissioner to order one party to pay the costs of another. We understand from the commissioners that they would not welcome the responsibility of adjudicating in such a way, and, of course, in many public service vehicle operator licensing cases, particularly the disciplinary ones of which we are primarily thinking, there is only one party—the person whom the commissioner has called to the inquiry.

The regulations we shall make under subsection (4A) will limit the recovery of costs to cases where the person against whom the award is made has acted vexatiously, frivolously or the like. The vast majority of people appearing at commissioners' inquiries, for whatever reason, need not fear an increased expense. Indeed, they and all licence holders will benefit if the commissioners' costs are kept down because all costs are met from fees. We see that power as a deterrent and, we hope, an effective one—and not a way of raising money.

The regulations will lay down the way in which costs are calculated, and a maximum. That will prevent the commissioners' task from being invidious.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6

REGISTRATION OF LOCAL SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 6, line 2, leave out second "a" and insert "an unconditional".

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 6, in page 6, line 4, after "bus" insert "belonging to that person".

No. 7, in page 6, line 5, at end insert—

"(4A) In subsection (4) above "unconditional", in relation to a PSV operator's licence, means a licence which does not have attached to it a condition imposed under section 26(1) of this Act prohibiting, or having the effect of prohibiting, the operator from using vehicles under the licence to provide the service to which the application in question relates."

No. 8, in page 6, line 9, leave out "at the instance of" and insert

("on an application made by")

No 9, in page 6, line 14, leave out from "commissioner" to "and" in line 15, and insert "accepts the application".

No. 10, in page 6, line 43, leave out paragraph *(e)* and insert—

"*(e)* for an application for registration or for the variation or cancellation of a registration not to be accepted by the traffic commissioner to whom it is made unless the applicant gives to the commissioner such information as he may reasonably require in connection with the application.".

No. 12, in page 7, line 24, at end insert—

"*(kk)* for excluding from the application of this section services which are—

(i) excursions or tours; or

(ii) excursions or tours falling within a prescribed class.".

No. 14, in clause 7, page 7, line 44, leave out from "service" to end of line 45 and insert

"means any local service to which section 6 of this Act applies".

No. 32, in clause 12, page 14, line 41, at end insert—

"(5A) in subsection (5)*(b)* above "local service" does not include an excursion or tour.".

No. 50, in clause 25, page 25, line 36, at end insert—

"(2A) Where the effect of a condition attached to a PSV operator's licence under subsection (1) above is that the operator of a local service registered under section 6 of this Act is prohibited from using vehicles under the licence to provide that service, the traffic commissioner attaching the condition may—

(a) cancel the registration; or

(b) where the service is registered with another traffic commissioner, direct that it be cancelled.

(2B) Where a direction is given under subsection (2A)*(b)* above, it shall be the duty of the traffic commissioner with whom the service is registered to cancel the registration.".

No. 269, in clause 110, page 109, line 21, leave out paragraph *(a)* and insert—

"*(a)* applications for the registration of services under section 6 of this Act and for the variation of such registrations.

Mr. Ancram: This group of amendments closes some possible loopholes in the registration system, by precluding registration by operators with conditions on their operators' licences, preventing them from running local services, or by education authorities which are using contract services rather than their own vehicles to provide school transport. That makes it more flexible by allowing for the exemption of certain excursions or tours from registration. We propose to require only these excursions that are hard to distinguish from ordinary local services to register. The other amendments in the group are drafting improvements.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 13 agreed to.

Clause 7

Application of traffic regulation conditions to local services subject to registration under section 6

Lords amendment No. 14 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 15, in page 8, line 41, leave out from beginning to "received", in line 43, and insert "if he has".

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 16, in page 9, line 8, leave out "or *(b)*" and insert "and the request has not been withdrawn.

(10) Subsection (9) above shall not apply where the traffic commissioner".

No. 17, in page 9, line 14, after "*(a)*" insert "(i) or (iii)".

No. 18, in page 9, line 15, after "above" insert "or any other traffic authority affected by the conditions".

No. 19, in page 9, line 15, leave out from second "the" to "asked" in line 16 and insert "prescribed period".

No. 21, in page 9, line 38, leave out "any traffic area in".

No. 23, in page 9, line 39, leave out from "county" to "and", in line 40.

No. 24, in page 9, line 41, leave out "any traffic area in".

No. 25, in page 9, line 42, leave out from "area" to end of line 43.

Mr. Ancram: These amendments clarify the wording of the provision that requires traffic commissioners to hold inquiries into traffic regulations conditions on request, and recognise that a neighbouring county, metropolitan district or Scottish regional or island council may have a legitimate interest in a condition — especially one relating to a road or roads close to a county or other boundary.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 16 to 21 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 22, in page 9, line 39, after "any" insert "metropolitan district or non-metropolitan".

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 72, in clause 36, page 34, line 5, leave out "the Greater London Council and".

No. 75, in clause 37, page 35, line 9, leave out "Greater London Council" and insert "council of a London borough or by the Common Council,".

No. 79, in clause 45, page 42, line 4, leave out "the Greater London Council and".

No. 80, in clause 45, page 42, line 13, leave out "the Greater London Council and".

No. 92, in clause 57, page 50, line 35, leave out from beginning to end of line 7 on page 51 and insert—

"*(a)* each of the following areas, that is to say—

(i) in England and Wales, the metropolitan counties; and

(ii) in Scotland, that part of the Strathclyde region which was a designated area for the purposes of this Part of this Act immediately before the date on which section 57 of the Transport Act 1985 came into operation;

shall be a passenger transport area;

(b) the Passenger Transport Authority for a passenger transport area (referred to below in this Part of this Act, in relation to that area, as "the Authority") shall be—

(i) in relation to a passenger transport area in England and Wales, the metropolitan county council; and

(ii) in relation to the Strathclyde passenger transport area, the Strathclyde regional council; and

(c) the Passenger Transport Executive for a passenger transport area (referred to below in this Part of this Act, in relation to that area, as "the Executive") shall be the body which immediately before the date mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above was the Passenger Transport Executive for the designated area for the purposes of this Part of this Act corresponding to that passenger transport area.".

No. 95, in clause 57, page 51, line 35, leave out from beginning to "and" in line 15 on page 52.

New Clause

Local Government Reorganisation: Transport Functions.

No. 106, after clause 57, insert—

" .—(1) The following provisions of this section with the exception of subsection (4) shall have effect from the abolition date within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1985 (that is to say, 1st April 1986).

(2) In section 9 of the 1968 Act (as amended by section 57(1) of this Act)—

(a) in subsection (1)—

(i) at the beginning there shall be inserted the words "Subject to any order under section 42(1) *(c)* of the Local Government Act 1985 (alteration or abolition of passenger transport areas, etc.)"; and

(ii) in paragraph *(b)* (i), for the word "council" there shall be substituted the words "passenger transport authority for the county which is coterminous with or includes that passenger transport area";

(b) in subsection (4), after the word "the" (where it last occurs) there shall be inserted the words "county which is coterminous with or includes that"; and

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

(c) in subsection (5), as it applies in England and Wales, after the words "comprised in" there shall be inserted the words "a county which is coterminous with or includes".

(2A) In section 9B(1) of that Act, after the words "comprised in" there shall be inserted the words "county which is coterminous with or includes".

(3) In the Local Government Act 1985—

(a) paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Schedule 12 shall be omitted;

(b) in section 39(2) (operative dates for schedule 12), for the words "paragraphs 1 to 4" there shall be substituted the words "paragraphs 3"; and

(c) in section 42(1)*(c)* (reorganisation of functions with respect to passenger transport), after the words "section 39 above" there shall be inserted the words "or section *(Local government reorganisation: transport functions)* of the Transport Act 1985".

(4) Provisions of that Act referrring generally to that Act, or to any provision made by or under that Act, shall have effect as if subsections (1) to (2A) above were contained in that Act.".

No. 169, in clause 70, page 71, line 42, leave out "the" and insert "any"

No. 170, in clause 70, page 72, line 2, at end insert—

"(1A) Where a public transport company's controlling authority are a Passenger Transport Authority for a passenger transport area in England and Wales, a director of that company who is paid for acting as such or is an employee of that company or a subsidiary of that company shall be disqualified for being appointed or being a member of hat Passenger Transport Authority."

No. 171, in clause 70, in page 72, line 5, after "above" insert

"or of any such Passenger Transport Authority as is mentioned in subsection (1A) above".

No. 172, in clause 70, page 72, line 6, leave out "the council" and insert

"that council or Authority".

No. 176, in clause 70, page 73, line 8, after "authority" insert

", and any Passenger Transport Authority for a passenger transport area in England and Wales who are a public transport company's controling authority,".

No. 177, in clause 70, page 73, line 9, leave out "the council" and insert

"that council or Authority".

No. 178, in clause 70, page 73, line 10, leave out "the council" and insert

"that council or Authority".

No. 180, in clause 70, page 73, line 15, leave out from "any" to "or" in line 17 and insert

"such council or Passenger Transport Authority as is mentioned in subsection (8) above".

No. 181, in clause 70, page 73, line 19, at end insert

"or Passenger Transport Authority".

No. 182, in clause 70, page 73, line 21, leave out "such councils" and insert

"that council or Authority".

No. 183, in clause 70, page 73, line 23, leave out "the council" and insert

"that council or Authority".

No. 184, in clause 70, page 73, line 26, after "Act" insert

", except that it includes also a metropolitan county passenger transport authority".

No. 185, in clause 70, page 73, line 22, after "council" insert

"or Passenger Transport Authority as is mentioned in subsection (8) above".

No. 232, in clause 93, page 96, line 4 at end insert "and".

No. 233, in clause 93, page 96, line 12, leave out from "above" to end of line 14.

No. 234, in clause 93, page 96, line 22, at end insert "and".

No. 235, in clause 93, page 96, line 24, leave out from "*(d)*" to end of line 28.

No. 292, in clause 123, page 119, line 22, after "section" insert

", section *(Local government reorganisation: transport functions)* of this Act".

No. 293, in clause 123, page 119, line 24, at end insert "(including different purposes of the same provision)".

No. 325, in schedule 3, page 129, line 26, after "(4)") insert ("(i)".

No. 326, in schedule 3, page 129, leave out lines 28 to 30 and insert

""The Authority for the Executive's area";.

(ii) for the words "such a council" there shall be substituted the words "the Authority for a passenger transport area"; and

(iii) for the word "council" in each place where it occurs in paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* there shall be substituted the word "Authority".".

No. 327, in schedule 3, page 129, leave out lines 33 to 39 and insert—

"Power to make grants

13. The Authority shall have power to make grants to the Executive for any purpose."

No. 328, in schedule 3, page 129, line 41, leave out from "Wales" to end of line 43 and insert

"for the words "for the designated area and to each of the councils fof constituent areas" there shall be substituted the words "and to each of the councils of the districts comprised in the county which is coterminous with or includes the Executive's area"".

No. 333, in schedule 3, page 132, line 17, leave out "county council" and insert "Authority".

No. 335, in schedule 3, page 133, line 14, leave out paragraph *(a)* and insert—

"*(a)* in subsection (1)

(i) in paragraph *(a)* the words "whose area is either the whole or part of one county" shall be omitted, and for the words "county council" there shall be substituted the words "metropolitan county passenger transport authority for the county which is coterminous with or includes that Executive's area"; and

(ii) for the word "council" in each place where it occurs in paragraphs *(b)* to *(d)* there shall be substituted the word "authority";".

No. 337, in schedule 3, page 133, line 32, leave out paragraph 32.

No. 389, in schedule 7, page 150, line 31, column 3, leave out from "14(3)" to end of line 33 and insert—

"as it applies to Scotland, the words "for the designated area".".

No. 419, in schedule 7, page 154, line 16, at end insert—

"1985 c. 51.	The Local Government Act 1985.	In section 42(1)*(c)*, the words "which is or was coterminous with a metropolitan county". In schedule 12, paragraphs 1, 2, 3(2) and 4. In schedule 14, paragraph 59(1)*(e)*.".

Mr. Ridley: These amendments are all consequential on the enactment of the Local Government Act 1985. As the House knows, that Act became law after this Bill had left the House, and the amendments are a result of that Act now being on the statute book.

If any hon. Member wishes to ask about any particular amendment, I shall be happy to reply. However, it is a complex and technical story which I would spare the House if it does not wish to hear it.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 23 to 25 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 26 to 37 agreed to.

New Clause

TAXI LICENSING: CONTROL OF NUMBERS

Lords amendment: No. 38, to leave out clause 16 and insert the following new clause—

"**16.** The provisions of the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 with respect to hackney carriages, as incorporated in any enactment (whenever passed), shall have effect—

(a) as if in section 37, the words "such number of" and "as they think fit" were omitted; and

(b) as if they provided that the grant of a licence may be refused, for the purpose of limiting the number of hackney carriages in respect of which licences are granted, if, but only if, the person authorised to grant licences is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages (within the area to which the licence would apply) which is unmet."

6.30 pm

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient to take at the same time Lords amendment No. 381, schedule 6, in page 149, leave out lines 30 to 38 and insert—

""(3) Without prejudice to paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to this Act, the grant of a taxi licence may be refused by a licensing authority for the purpose of limiting the number of taxis in respect of which licences are granted by them if, but only if, they are satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of taxis in their area which is unmet.""

Mr. Ridley: This group of amendments changes substantially clause 16 from the form in which it left the House. The main change is to the criteria according to which a district council may refuse to grant a taxi licence to limit the number of taxis, a rather convoluted provision that we had taken from the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, which had attracted some adverse comment in this House and was the subject of litigation in the Scottish courts. It has been replaced by a much clearer set of words.

As well as that change to the criteria, the form in which they are expressed has been changed in response to constructive criticism in another place. The amendment to the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 is now made by reference rather than textually. Such a method of amendment is, generally, the inferior one, but in a case such as this—for which the antiquity of the statute is to blame—it produces a clearer result, and there is no need to refer to the interpretation Act or to the "prescribed distance", a concept which is a throwback to the last century.

I should perhaps emphasise that there is no fundamental change in policy. It is the Government's clear view that the restriction of numbers in any industry is justifiable only in the most exceptional circumstances and that the strict limits which many district councils have imposed have been bad for the trade and for its customers. The Bill opens the way for the taxi trade to expand into new markets, in particular those at shared fares. It would be a tragedy if it failed to take advantage of these opportunities, kept out new blood and remained wedded to the past. It would be a tragedy if the only way someone could start a new small taxi business was to spend many thousands of pounds on buying someone else's plate.

The Bill does not, however, and never did, simply abolish quantity control. It allows a district council to refuse a licence application so as to limit numbers—as well, of course, as on grounds of unsuitability—but it puts the onus on the council of satisfying itself that there is no significant unmet demand. Any applicant who is refused a licence will be able to appeal to the Crown court, and I am sure that the court will test whether the council had good grounds for its refusal.

It will not be sufficient that the existing taxi trade says that it can cope or that it has always been the council's policy to have no more than, say, 87 taxis. If a new applicant intends to tap new markets—for instance, by running registered local services—I do not believe that any council could refuse the licence. But if there is demonstrably an over-supply of taxis in a district, as there may be in some cities, a licence could be refused.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify, in relation to the Scottish position, whether he is requiring district councils to review from time to time the number of taxis in their areas? He will be aware that I raised that matter in Committee.

Mr. Ridley: The amendment changes the wording of the Scottish measure so that the arrangements are the same as for England. Therefore, what I have been saying applies equally to Scotland.

I hope, therefore, that all district councils will review their policies and act liberally, as the law will require, and that we shall no longer see the sort of under-supply that has led to taxi plates changing hands at ridiculous prices. We shall, of course, monitor carefully what happens; and take everything into account in the review of taxi and hire car legislation that we shall undertake once the Bill has been implemented.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): I argued in Committee, as did a number of other hon. Members, that the Bill as originally drafted, by a liberal interpretation of the Scottish wording, allowed a local authority effectively to bring back quantity control by the back door. The amendments will make it much more difficult for a local authority to bring back quantity control without good reason. Consequently, I welcome them.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): What extra funds does the right hon. Gentleman intend to make available to local authorities for the monitoring of the position?

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues, in particular the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), for their responsive attitude when I brought to them a group of taxi drivers from my constituency. I am grateful for the consideration that Ministers have given to the points that were made and the way in which the Bill, as amended, will implement the requests that were made.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for taking on board many of the points that have been made during the passage of the Bill. I am certain that the way in which he has listened to the representations made by taxi drivers and licensed operators will be appreciated in that trade. I particularly welcome his

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

undertaking to review carefully what happens as a consequence of this legislation. That is important, because there is much scope for change and certain things may not go as planned. To have that undertaking for the future will give reassurance to this important trade.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I welcome the amendment. Its presence may have something to do with the fact that the noble and learned Lord Denning, as well as my noble Friend Lord Winchilsea, spoke on this issue in the other place. Common sense has at last prevailed in the description of the situation. For example, from the point of view of Liverpool, when all controls were removed, there were too many taxis on the streets with too few customers in them, and that led to much unrest and bickering between taxi operators.

Had the amendment not been proposed, I should have feared the worst in my constituency, certainly out of season. However, even in season, in Ryde esplanade and elsewhere, there would have been many arguments, because we already have too many taxis in competition. The amendment will introduce some balance into the situation, and for that it is to be welcomed.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) and for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) for their remarks. It is known that we shall be reviewing the whole of taxi legislation. That will be a mammoth task, but it will provide an opportunity to monitor the progress of this provision to see that it is operating correctly. As I said, we shall keep a close eye on it to make sure that all is well.

The answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is that we, not the local authorities, will be doing the monitoring, so no question of extra expense for local authorities arises.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 17

LONDON TAXI AND TAXI DRIVER LICENSING APPEALS

Lords amendment: No. 39, in page 18, line 28, leave out from "to" to end of line 29 and insert "the appropriate court".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments:

No. 40, in page 18, line 38, leave out from "to" to end of line 39 and insert "the appropriate court".

No. 41, in page 18, line 40, leave out "a magistrates" and insert "the".

No. 43, in page 19, line 17, at end insert—

"(10) In this section "the appropriate court" means the magistrates court for the petty sessions area in which the licensing authority has his office or, if he has more than one office, his principal office."

Mr. Mitchell: This group of technical amendments have the effect of changing the magistrates court to which appeals are to be made from that for the area in which the appellant resides to the court for the area in which the licensing authority has its office. It was pointed out in another place that the previous arrangement might prove inconvenient in that many taxi drivers live well outside London. That is a valid point and we are making these amendments to improve a position that has been generally welcomed.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Southwark): I am grateful that at last we shall have got right a clause which we have long needed. The House will be aware that the system under which licences were revoked or suspended disappeared into a silent mist originally in the office of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. One could never get at the facts. The system is to be moved to the Department of Transport, and with this amendment we shall get it into the court structure so that somebody who has his livelihood taken away will be able to challenge the decision in an open place, know the evidence against him and be able to argue against that evidence.

The Under-Secretary of State has cleared up the problems which rendered it inappropriate for a person's case to be determined where he resided. It is to be welcomed that it will be possible to argue a case, if someone is to be deprived of his livelihood, in the place where he earns his livelihood. I hope this part of the statute will be implemented soon. I do not agree with every part of the Bill, but I think that this part of it is good. I hope that its implementation will not be delayed after the Bill becomes law, so that taxi and cab drivers may have justice.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I think that this is a good example of the many instances where the Bill has been improved in its passage through the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 39 to 43 agreed to.

Clause 21

PERMITS UNDER SECTION 19: REGULATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 44, in page 22, line 14, leave out subsection (3).

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 280, in clause 117, page 114, line 8, leave out from beginning to "in" in line 11.

No. 281, in clause 118, page 115, line 13, at end insert "; and in subsection (2) of that section (duty to consult before making regulations under section 59 or 60 of that Act) the words "section 59 or 60 of" shall be omitted".

No. 412, in schedule 7 page 153, line 9, column 3, at end insert—

"In section 61(2) the words "section 59 or 60 of"".

Mr. Mitchell: The amendments tidy up the requirement on the Secretary of State to consult representative organisations before making regulations under the 1981 Act or parts I or II of the Bill. They are technical, and I suspect that they will meet with the approval of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 24

LIMIT ON NUMBER OF VEHICLES TO BE USED UNDER A RESTRICTED LICENCE

Lords amendment: No. 45, in page 24, line 22, after "not" insert

", except in any prescribed case or class or case,".

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is designed to recognise the special position of the Post Office, which runs a large number of post buses under restricted licenses. The Post Office, therefore, needs an exemption from the limitation of two to the number of vehicles that may be run under such a licence.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

OBJECTIONS TO APPLICATION FOR PSV OPERATORS' LICENCE

Lords amendment: No. 46, after clause 24, insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) After section 14 of the 1981 Act (Grant of licences) there shall be inserted the following section—

"Objections to application for PSV operators' licence

14A.—(1) Where an application is made for the grant of a PSV operator's licence under this Act any chief officer of police or local authority may object to the grant of the licence on the ground that one or more of the requirements mentioned in section 14(1) and (3) of this Act are not satisfied in relation to the application.

(2) An objection under this section shall be made within the prescribed time and in the prescribed manner and shall contain particulars of the ground on which it is made.

(3) The onus of proof of the existence of the ground on which an objection is made shall lie on the objector.

(4) In this section "local authority" means—

(a) in England and Wales, the council of a county, district or London borough or the Common Council of the City of London or a Passenger Transport Executive, and

(b) in Scotland, a regional or islands council.

(5) This section does not apply in relation to any application for a special licence (within the meaning of section 12 of the Transport Act 1985)."

Read a Second time.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I beg to move amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 6, after 'authority', insert

'or any individual resident living in the area of the relevant traffic authority'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendment: No. 55, in clause 30, page 28, line 33, at end insert—

"(2A) Where an application for a PSV operator's licence is granted under this Act and a person who duly made an objection to the grant under section 14A of this Act is aggrieved by the grant of the licence he may appeal to the Transport Tribunal."

Mrs. Dunwoody: Amendment No. 46 tends to put together some of the ingredients which were found in the Bill as it first came before the House. It highlights the absurdity and, indeed, farcical quality of much of the debate that has taken place.

Clause 22 of the original Bill included the perfectly sensible undertaking that those who wished to make representations to the traffic commissioners could do so where they had reason to believe that those who were being considered for licences were not suitable. We then had an extraordinary element of humour in the Committee because, half way through Committee, Conservative Back Benchers discovered that the clause was dangerous and had to be taken out of the Bill. Ministers agreed with astonishing alacrity. It is obvious that they reconsidered the position and appreciated that there would be those who wished to give evidence to the traffic commissioners. After much humming and hawing, we have a milder, much weaker undertaking that provides that those who are involved with local authorities and the police can object. We think that is excellent.

Where there are environmental matters, it is important that local authorities should have a say. It is quite possible that the police will know something about prospective operators and their past records. However, those who may still be in the best position to weigh up the real impact of an application are other operators, members of the public or business men and professionals with local knowledge. They will be unable to object.

The Government repeatedly said that the Bill is about protecting the interests of the public. We know that that claim is totally hollow and that their aim is to break up efficient public enterprises so that their friends can take the profits on the good routes while casting the remainder to the winds and the few crumbs of subsidy that will be left.

If the Government really are a caring Administration who mean what they say, let them accept the amendment.

6.45 pm

Mr. David Mitchell: The amendment to the amendment is undesirable——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Why?

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Lady will allow me, I shall explain. The amendment is undesirable because we must keep to the minimum the number of people able, by appealing against the grant of a licence, to prolong the time during which a new operator is uncertain whether he has a stable business or not. It is unnecessary, because if anyone—operators, suppliers or private individuals—has reason to know that an applicant for a licence does not satisfy the requirements as to good repute, financial standing and professional competence, and tells the traffic commissoner, the commissioner is bound to consider what he is being told. He cannot ignore the facts, if they are relevant, merely because the person has no formal status as an objector.

We considered this matter fully in Committee and there is nothing further which can be said. I have explained that the amendment is not desirable because it will cause delay and uncertainty. We want to encourage new operators. We do not wish to erect barriers to bar them, as the hon. Lady would. The hon. Lady would regulate everything out of existence if she had the opportunity to do so.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I think it will be noted by the general public that at a time when there are considerable worries about the safety of public vehicles, the Minister feels that there is no need to give the general public the right to make representations on important matters such as new operators and their suitability for licence.

Mr. Mitchell: I want the hon. Lady to be quite clear that she is completely wrong in what she has just said. There is nothing to stop the people to whom she is referring from making representations——

Mrs. Dunwoody: They have no standing.

Mr. Mitchell: They do not have the status of objectors which enables them to appeal against the traffic commissioner's findings, but they do have the right to make representations. The hon. Lady is entirely wrong to suggest that they have no right to do so.

Amendment (a) negatived.

Lords amendment No. 46 agreed to.

Clause 25

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO PSV OPERATORS' LICENCES

Lords amendment: No. 48, in page 25, line 27, leave out "shall not" and insert "may"

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 49, in page 25, line 29, leave out from "subsection" to second "or" in line 31 and insert

"if, but only if, it appears to him that the operator did not have a reasonable excuse for his conduct".

Mr. Mitchell: Under the clause as drafted the traffic commissioner may attach conditions preventing an operator from running local services in future if he has broken the registration rules, but he may do so only if the operator's conduct was intentional, reckless, dangerous or frequent. The amendment substitutes the words "without reasonable excuse" for "intentional or reckless". "Intentional or reckless" was taken from the 1981 Act, where it qualifies the circumstances in which a road service licence may be revoked because of breaches of conditions by operators. "Without reasonable excuse" is used in the clause which deals with loss of fuel duty rebate for contravention of registration rules, and is more modern and appropriate.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 49 and 50 agreed to.

Clause 26

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO PSV OPERATORS' LICENCES UNDER SECTION 25

Lords amendment No. 51: in page 26, line 19, leave out from beginning to "or" in line 22 and insert

"if he, within the prescribed period, received a request for an inquiry from the holder of, or (as the case may be) applicant for, the licence."

Mr. Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 52, in page 26, line 22, leave out "or *(b)*" and insert—

"(2) Subsection (1) above shall not apply where the traffic commissioner"

Mr. Mitchell: These are drafting amendments which clarify the circumstances in which the commissioner must hold an inquiry into conditions which he is attaching to an operator's licence.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 52 to 54 agreed to.

Clause 30

APPEALS UNDER THE 1981 ACT

Lords amendments No. 55 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 56, in page 29, line 25, at end insert—

"(5A) Where a traffic commissioner has given a direction under subsection (5) above he may withdraw it at any time."

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments:

No. 57, in page 29, line 27, after "above" insert "or withdraws such a direction".

No. 58, in page 29, line 28, leave out second "it" and insert "such a direction".

No. 59, in page 29, line 31, leave out "Subsections (3) to (7) above do" and insert "This section does".

No. 60, in page 29, line 35, leave out from beginning to end of line 43.

No. 61, in page 30, line 9, leave out from beginning to "may" in line 13 and insert—

"(2) Where the refusal by a certifying officer or public service vehicle examiner to remove a prohibition under subsection (1) of section 9 of this Act (including a prohibition under that subsection as it applies by virtue of section 9A of this Act) has been referred to a certifying officer ("the referee") under subsection (8) of that section by a traffic commissioner, any person aggrieved by the refusal of the referee to remove the prohibition".

No. 62, in page 30, line 24, leave out from "officer" to "for" in line 25.

No. 63, in page 30, line 26, leave out

"or public service vehicle examiner".

No. 375, in schedule 6, page 148, line 4, at end insert—

"(2A) In section 9 (power to prohibit driving of unfit public service vehicles), in subsection (8), after the word "examiner", in the second place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "or certifying officer" and for the words "by a certifying officer and" there shall be substituted—

"*(a)* in the case of a refusal by a public service vehicle examiner, by a certifying officer; and

(b) in the case of a refusal by a certifying officer, by another certifying officer;

and"."

Mr. Mitchell: This is a group of amendments to the clause which deals with appeals. The main change that the clause makes to the present law is to transfer appeals relating to PSV operators' licences from the Secretary of State to the transport tribunal. The amendments remove a right of appeal because a traffic commissioner has not reached a decision in a reasonable time. That was ill-defined and could have caused a tribunal much trouble.

The amendments also disapply anything relating to traffic regulation conditions, appeals on which go to the Secretary of State under clause 9. They also give the traffic commissioner the right to withdraw any stay of execution that he has granted pending an appeal, so that if one is withdrawn the operator affected can apply to the tribunal to have it granted.

Finally, the amendments tidy up the relationship between this clause and section 9 of the 1981 Act as to appeals against refusals to remove prohibitions on vehicles.

These are tidying-up amendments and do not represent any major change in policy.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 57 to 64 agreed to.

Clause 33

EXTENSION OF SAFETY CONTROLS TO CERTAIN PASSENGER VEHICLES OTHER THAN PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLES

Lords amendment: No. 65, in page 31, line 15, at end insert—

"as it applies to a public service vehicle".

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 66, in page 31, line 16, at end insert—

"motor vehicle as it applies to a public service".

No. 67, in line 17, leave out from "the" to the end of line 22 and insert "omission of subsection (4)".

Mr. Ancram: The substantive effect of these amendments is to make the penalty for driving a passenger vehicle with more than eight passenger seats, which has had a prohibition placed on it, identical irrespective of whether or not it is a public service vehicle. The penalty level is level 5, and it will be for the courts to fix penalties in the light of all the circumstances of an offence.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 66 and 67 agreed to.

Clause 34

LONDON LOCAL SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 68, in page 31, leave out lines 27 and 28.

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments:

No. 69, in page 31, line 32, after "Act" insert—

"*(a)* "bus service" means a local service other than an excursion or tour; and

(b)".

No. 71, in clause 36, page 34, line 1, leave out "under section 23(3) of this Act to"

No. 73, leave out lines 9 to 11 and insert—

"*(a)* in the case of a proposal to which subsection (2) above applies, any part of the route in question or (as the case may be) the point, place or street in question;".

No. 74, in line 13, leave out "an existing bus service" and insert—

"a proposal to which subsection (4) above applies".

No. 77, in clause 41, page 38 line 22, leave out "at the end of that period" and insert ", on the date on which a London local service licence is due to expire,".

No. 78, in clause 45, page 41, line 36, leave out ""London bus service" has the meaning" and insert ""bus service" and "London bus service" have the meanings".

No. 282, in clause 120, page 116, leave out lines 5 and 6.

Mr. Ancram: These are minor technical or drafting amendments to part II.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 69 to 71, agreed to.

Clause 35

PART II

LONDON LOCAL SERVICE LICENCES

Lords amendment: No. 70, in page 32, line 7, leave out from "service" to end of line 9 and insert—

"secured by the Board under section 4A of the 1962 Act (Board's power to secure the provision of bus services where a railway service has been temporarily interrupted or discontinued)."

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendments:

No. 105, in page 54, line 40, leave out from "apply" to end of line 41.

No. 258, in page 102, line 38, leave out from beginning to "the" in line 40 and insert

"(i) in paragraph *(a)*, sub-paragraph (iii) and".

No. 259, in page 103, line 36, leave out

"in the Executive's area of any bus substitution service"

and insert

"of any bus substitution service between places in the Executive's area or between such places and places outside that area but within the permitted distance for the purposes of section 10(1)(ii) of the 1968 Act as it applies to that Executive (that is to say, twenty-five miles from the nearest point on the boundary of that area).".

No. 260, in clause 105, page 104, line 41, at end insert—

"(4A) Where the proposed withdrawal of service relates to a service or part of a service which is subsidised by the Passenger Transport Executive for any passenger transport area under any agreement made with the Railways Board by virtue of section 104(3) of this Act, the Board shall not publish a notice with respect to the proposed withdrawal under subsection (1) above without the consent of the Executive to its publication.

(4B) If in any such case the Board publish such a notice before obtaining that consent, the notice shall be of no effect unless before the end of the period fixed by the notice for objecting to the revocation or variation of the relevant bus service condition either—

(a) the Executive have informed the Board in writing that they consent to the publication; or

(b) the Secretary of State, on an application made for the purpose by the Board (whether before or after the publication of the notice) and after offering the Executive what the Secretary of State considers a reasonable opportunity to make any representations, has directed that the notice shall have effect notwithstanding that the Executive have not consented to its publication.".

Amendment (a) to proposed Lords amendment No. 260, leave out lines 9 to 22.

No. 261, in page 104, line 42, after "Where" insert—

("in the case of any proposed withdrawal of service subsection (4A) above does not apply but").

No. 262, in page 104, line 43, leave out "of service".

No. 263, in clause 106, page 105, line 22, leave out from beginning to "lodge" in line 25 and insert—

"Where, in the case of any withdrawal of service to which section 105(4A) or (5) of this Act applies, notice of the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

withdrawal has been published under subsection (1) of that section, the Executive concerned may, within the period specified in the notice for objecting to the withdrawal".

No. 264, in page 105, line 27, at end insert—

"The fact that the Executive concerned gave their consent to the publication of the notice shall not affect their right under this subsection to oppose the withdrawal of service."

No. 265, in page 105, line 30, at end insert—

"(8) References above in this section to a notice published under section 105(1) of this Act do not include a notice which under subsection (4B) of that section is of no effect."

No. 266, in clause 108, page 108, line 25, leave out

""or" (in the third place where it occurs)"

and insert

""and to the Bus Company"".

No. 372, in page 46, line 14, column 1, leave out "charges and licences".

No. 396, in page 151, line 11, column 3, leave out

""or" (in the third place where it occurs)"

and insert

""and to the Bus Company"".

Mr. Mitchell: These are technical amendments. Amendment No. 70 corrects a drafting imperfection and exempts from London local service licensing not only permanent bus substitution services provided by BR, which under the clause as drafted are already exempted, but also any temporary BR bus services provided in London. This brings them into line with temporary replacement services outside London.

Amendments Nos. 105 and 258 are minor drafting improvements. Amendments Nos. 266 and 396 correct a technical imperfection to retain for the Secretary of State the power that he has under existing legislation to give directions to BR, LRT or LRT subsidiaries in connection with a closure consent. Amendment No. 372 simply corrects the description of the transport tribunal.

Amendments Nos. 259 to 265 ensure that the PTEs have the power to support bus substitution services, as they have under existing legislation to support rail services, and that where PTEs do support bus substitution services, their role in the case of a proposal by the board to withdraw the service is exactly parallel to that which they now have in relation to proposals to withdraw PTE-supported rail services.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 71 to 75 agreed to.

Clause 37

GRANT OF LICENCES

Lords amendment: No. 76, in page 35, line 35, after "are" insert "elderly or".

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 99, in clause 57, in page 53, line 13, after "public" insert—

"(including persons who are elderly or disabled)".

No. 100, in page 53, line 30, at end insert—

"(6A) It shall be the duty both of the Authority and of the Executive for any passenger transport area, in exercising or performing any of their functions under the preceding provisions of this section, to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.".

No. 128, in clause 61, in page 60, line 36, after first "public" insert—

"(including persons who are elderly or disabled)".

No. 129, in page 60, line 43, at end insert—

"(8A) It shall be the duty of any council, in exercising or performing any of their functions under the preceding provisions of this section, to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.".

No. 130, in page 61, line 15, after "Act" insert—

", other than services provided wholly or mainly to meet the needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.".

No. 240, after clause 95, insert the following new clause—

"Grants for transport facilities and services

.—(1) Any authority to whom this section applies, or any two or more such authorities acting jointly, may make, in such cases and subject to such terms and conditions as they think fit, grants to any other person towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by that person in providing, maintaining or improving—

(a) any vehicle, equipment or other facilities provided wholly or mainly for the purpose of facilitating travel by members of the public who are disabled; or

(b) any equipment or other facilities specially designed or adapted for that purpose which are incorporated in any vehicle, equipment or other facilities not provided wholly or mainly for that purpose.

(2) Subject to subsection (3) below, any such authority, or any two or more such authorities acting jointly, may make, in such cases and subject to such terms and conditions as they think fit, grants to any person providing public passenger transport services towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by that person for the purpose of—

(a) maintaining or improving facilities for public passenger transport, other than facilities provided wholly or mainly for use for the purpose of or in connection with excepted services; or

(b) facilitating or improving the operation of public passenger transport services, other than excepted services;

in the area of that authority or (as the case may be) in the area comprising the areas of both or all those authorities.

In this subsection "excepted services" means services for the carriage of passengers by road which require a PSV operator's licence (within the meaning of Part IV of this Act).

(3) Subsection (2) above shall not apply in relation to expenditure appearing to the authority or authorities in question to be of a capital nature.

(4) This section applies to the following authorities—

(a) any Passenger Transport Authority or Passenger Transport Executive;

(b) the council of any county or district in England and Wales;

(c) the council of a London borough or the common Council of the City of London; or

(d) any regional or islands council in Scotland."

No. 241, after clause 95, insert the following new clause

" Grants by London Regional Transport — Grants for services for disabled people in London

.—(1) London Regional Transport may make, in such cases and subject to such terms and conditions as they think fit, grants to any voluntary organisation for the purpose of meeting (in whole or in part) any expenditure incurred or to be incurred by that organisation for the purpose of the provision of transport services provided by that organisation solely to meet the needs ofdisabled members of the public resident in London.

(2) In subsection (1) above "voluntary organisation" means a body the activities of which are carried on otherwise than for profit, but does not include any public or local authority."

Amendment *(a)* to proposed Lords amendment No. 241, in line 3, leave out from 'Transport' to end of section and add

'shall make grants to any voluntary organisations that it thinks fit, in order to ensure the provision of adequate public transport facilities for disabled people with special needs.'".

No. 268, after clause 109, insert the following new clause—

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

—(1) There shall be established in accordance with this section a body to be known as the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

(2) The Committee shall consist of—

(a) a chairman appointed by the Secretary of State; and

(b) not less than ten, nor more than twenty, other members appointed by the Secretary of State after consultation with such bodies as appear to him to be representative of the interests of persons likely to be significantly concerned with matters within the competence of the Committee.

(3) The Secretary of State shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, secure that at all times at least half of the membership of the Committee consists of persons who are disabled.

(4) The Secretary of State may appoint one or more members of the Committee to be deputy chairman or (as the case may be) deputy chairmen of the Committee.

(5) It shall be the duty of the Committee to consider any matter, relating to the needs of disabled persons in connection with public passenger transport, which is referred to them by the Secretary of State or which they think it appropriate to consider without such a reference and to give such advice to the Secretary of State on any matter which they have considered as they think appropriate.

(6) The Committee shall make an annual report to the Secretary of State, who shall lay a copy of it before each House of Parliament.

("(6A) The Secretary of State shall from time to time issue guidance as to measures that may be taken with a view to—

(a) making access to vehicles used in the provision of public passenger transport services by road easier for disabled persons; and

(b) making such vehicles better adapted to the needs of disabled persons.

(6B) The Secretary of State shall consult the Committee before issuing any such guidance.")

(7) Schedule (*the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee*) to this Act shall have effect with respect to the Committee.".

No. 342, before Schedule 5, insert the following new Schedule—

"SCHEDULE

THE DISABLED PERSONS TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Administration, etc.

1. The Secretary of State shall make arrangements for the Committee to be provided with such administrative support and office accommodation as he considers appropriate.

2. The Secretary of State shall provide the Committee with funds with which to pay to their members such travelling and other allowances, and to defray such other expenses in connection with their functions, as he may determine.

Constitution and procedure

3.—(1) Any person appointed to be a member of the Committee shall hold and vacate office in accordance with the terms of his appointment and shall, on ceasing to be a member of the Committee, be eligible for re-appointment.

(2) Any person so appointed may at any time resign his office by written notice given to the Secretary of State.

4.—(1) The Committee shall meet whenever convened by the chairman and at least four times a year.

(2) Without prejudice to the discretion of the chairman to call a meeting whenever he thinks fit, he shall call one when required to do so by any five members of the Committee.

(3) Minutes shall be kept of the proceedings of every meeting of the Committee.

(4) Subject to the preceding provisions of this paragraph, the Committee shall determine their own procedure (including the quorum at their meetings).

5. The Committee may delegate the exercise and performance of any of their functions to such of their sub-committees as they think fit.

6. The validity of any proceedings of the Committee shall not be affected by any vacancy amongst the members, by any defect in the appointment of a member or by any failure to comply with the requirement imposed by section (*the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee*) (3) of this Act.

(6A) The Secretary of State shall from time to time issue guidance as to measures that may be taken with a view to—

(a) making access to vehicles used in the provision of public passenger transport services by road easier for disabled persons; and

(b) making such vehicles better adapted to the needs of disabled persons.

(6B) The Secretary of State shall consult the Committee before issuing any such guidance.".

No. 420, in the title, in line 7, after "concessions" insert—

"to make further provision with respect to the powers of London Regional Transport".

No. 421, in line 11, after "1965" insert—

"to establish a Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee".

Mr. Ridley: The Government have introduced a number of amendments and have accepted others designed to ensure that proper attention is paid to the needs of disabled people as users of public transport. It might be useful to the House if I deal with them briefly together, although of course I shall respond if anybody wishes to probe any of them further. One of the amendments may well give the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) an opportunity to do so.

As a whole, the amendments clarify the responsibilities of local authorities to provide new powers for the support of minibus services meeting the needs of elderly and disabled people, and for the provision of grants for vehicles, or modifications to vehicles, and give LRT a new power to support dial-a-ride services in London, establish a new disabled persons' advisory committee and place an obligation on me to issue guidance on the measures that can be taken to make vehicles more accessible to disabled people. Taken together, the amendments will lead to a real improvement in the way in which public transport meets the needs of disabled people.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I had hoped that the Secretary of State, in his new mood of reasonableness, would be happy to accept the amendment in our name. It would have made the matter simpler.

I had thought that the Secretary of State would not only accept that we need a committee to make recommendations, but make sure that it had some hope of seeing those recommendations adopted and brought into use. I had hoped that at long last the Secretary of State would accept that the amendments that we are proposing are constructive.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 77 to 80 agreed to.

Clause 47

TRANSFER OF OPERATIONS OF THE BUS COMPANY TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Lords amendment: No. 81, in page 43, line 13, after "Company" insert

"or any subsidiary of theirs".

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

No. 82, in page 43, line 13, at end insert "or any such subsidiary".

No. 83, in page 43, line 17, leave out from "employment" to the end of line 18.

No. 88, in clause 53, page 49, line 3, after "maintenance" insert ", to any extent,".

No. 89, in page 49, line 4, leave out from "by" to "or" in line 6 and insert—

"(i) any person who is or has been employed by the Company (or any subsidiary of theirs); or
(ii) a member of such a person's family;".

No. 90, in page 49, line 9, after "loss" insert "reduction or limitation".

No. 91, in page 49, line 11 at end insert—

"(6A) Without prejudice to the generality of section 47(1)(c) of this Act, the arrangements there mentioned may include provision for the making by the Company of payments in compensation for any loss, reduction or limitation of any such concession, benefit or privilege as is mentioned in subsection (6) above to the extent that provision in respect of the loss, reduction or limitation is not made by virtue of that subsection.".

Amendment (a) to proposed Lords amendment No. 91, in line 3, leave out 'may' and insert 'must'.

Amendment (b) to proposed Lords amendment No. 91, in line 6, leave out from 'privilege' to end of line 8 and add

'and must include provision for the maintenance of pension rights of equal value to those existing prior to implementation of the disposal programme'.

7 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): It is understandable that we have become a little confused, because of the rapid rate at which we are moving through the amendment paper. It might be as well if we slowed that pace and examined precisely what the other place has been doing in other major areas of concern.

Mr. Speaker's selection list has caused us some difficulty with respect to amendment No. 83, which is in this group of amendments. The Opposition are attempting to disagree with the Lords in the said amendment, but, because of the time factor, and because of the ludicrously tight guillotine, I do not intend to pursue our arguments on amendment No. 83, but will deal more specifically with our arguments on amendments (a) and (b) to proposed Lords amendment No. 91.

Our intentions are obvious. The pension provision for people in the National Bus Company is causing concern. There have been broadly two approaches to pension funds in privatisation plans—both maintaining some version of "no worsening" plans. In my industry, in British Telecom, privatisation meant that the entire pension fund was paid over en bloc. When the predecessor of the present Secretary of State decided to sell off Sealink, the staff remained in the British Rail pension scheme.

In the case of the NBC there will be no company left, because it is to be broken into smaller units, in line with the Government's competition theories. This means that there will be no large company with the resources to underwrite the current pension funds.

So long as the Government's predictions on inflation and investment returns are exactly correct, for the next 40 or more years, there will be no problem. The Government appear to want NBC staff to believe that this is possible. However, if in any one year there is a shortfall, pensions will have to be topped up from some other source. There are two possible sources. The new staff of NBC paying into the fund is one source. That will end when NBC closes, thus turning the National Bus pension fund and BEST into "closed" funds.

The other guarantee was a straight payment from NBC. That will also go. We heard recently that the Government intend using some insurance companies to assist them in this dilemma. At present, 15,000 former employees and 10,000 staff dependants receive funds from the NBC pension fund. In addition, NBC had 51,000 staff at the end of April 1983. All those people who have been paying into the pension funds believe that their pensions will be cut and that the provisions will no longer be forthcoming.

Mr. David Mitchell: Nonsense.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman might say that that is nonsense, but he will have the opportunity later, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to assuage some of the fears of people in the industry. In spite of what he may say, he has not yet done that. If he had done so, perhaps we would not have had the strike by bus men, which is the only way in which they could demonstrate their rejection of his pension proposals.

The amendments which were tabled in the other place provide for a guarantee by the Secretary of State that at normal retirement date, employees of the NBC or its subsidiaries will receive pensions no less than those which they were entitled to receive on the day the NBC was privatised. Lord Belstead said that this was calling for a guarantee which the Government could not give. He said:

"It would be an open-ended commitment of taxpayers' money and in that respect it would go further than NBC does already." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 October 1985; Vol. 467, c. 347.]

I remind the Secretary of State of the two examples that I quoted. I remind him of the employees in British Telecom who were former civil servants, then former public servants, and who now work for a private company. Their pension provision, from Civil Service status to public service status to private status, has been maintained and guaranteed, so the principle has been established. The people who were employed by Sealink are still members of British Rail's pension fund, so there has been no worsening of their position.

What does the Secretary of State propose to do with the employees' pension provisions in British Airways when it is sold to private enterprise? I understand that the Secretary of State has given a nod and a wink to the idea that their pension provisions will be secured and they will be looked after. If so, why will only people in the transport industry — the bus men and bus women who have worked in the industry all their lives—see their pensions at risk? That is why we have tabled these amendments.

I understand that in the case of NBC the Government propose to hand over the entire assets of the BEST pension fund to the Standard Life Assurance Company, which proposes to reduce the benefits already earned.

Mr. David Mitchell: Nonsense.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman may say that that is nonsense. We shall have to see on closer examination whether he can persuade us that that is the case. I remind him that sitting next to him is the Minister of State—the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker)—who has been quoted on a number of occasions on this matter. She claimed that staff pensions would not be worsened by the

provisions of the Transport Bill 1985 and that it would be "wrong if it did". In 1985 that pledge has been broken. I do not know whether the hon. Lady can justify those claims, which were made when the position was put to her by not only the Labour Front Bench but by members of the transport industry.

These amendments on the pension fund issue are our last chance to put this matter right. Throughout the whole year of discussions on this wretched Bill there has been an acceptance of certain technical and drafting amendments. These amendments were "technical" and "drafting" to facilitate the lunacy of the Secretary of State. They were not in any sense a response to the sensible and orchestrated opposition to the Bill from almost every section of society. If the Secretary of State has any doubts about that, I can supply him with a Marplan poll concerning his proposals. He would get a big shock on seeing what people think about the ruination of co-ordination of transportation.

We are at the eleventh hour—it is almost midnight for the Bill. If we do not get any movement on the question of pension schemes for NBC staff, this will be to the immense electoral disadvantage of the Secretary of State and his party at the general election. I spent the summer travelling around the country talking to people employed in the transport industry. I talked to bus men and bus women in their garages and on their buses. I had big meetings in Dover and in Chippenham. I had meetings in the south of England, in the good underbelly of Tory Britain. The bus men were worried.

Mr. Ridley: What did the hon. Gentleman tell them?

Mr. Stott: I told them that their trustees did not accept the Government's scheme. The trustees of the NBC's pension scheme have rejected the Government's proposal.

Mr. Ridley: They do not know what they are talking about.

Mr. Stott: The Secretary of State says that they do not know what they are talking about. The right hon. Gentleman has the habit of leading with his chin. I hope that *Hansard* has got that intervention for posterity and that it is there for all to see. Sometimes I despair when I am trying to plead with the Secretary of State for common sense to prevail. We are asking for acceptance of amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 91 which we believe are in the spirit of what the hon. Member for Wallasey meant when she said that it would be wrong if there was a worsening of the position.

In Committee I said that people employed by the NBC had arrived at a point where their pensions were secure. Their pension entitlements have been negotiated by the trade union with their employer. It is not the employer or the trade union, but the Government who are moving the goal posts. The Government are changing the scene. It is not the fault of the NBC or the TGWU, but the fault of the Secretary of State. He has moved the goal posts and muddied the waters. If he has changed the ball game, he should accept responsibility to ensure that the pension rights are maintained.

Mr. Stephen Ross: I wish to support amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 91. Even at this late hour, I hope that we will have an explanation from the Government of whether the points just made from the Opposition Front Bench are right. I have read the debates in the other place. Unfortunately, by four votes the final effort to pass something similar to the amendments was lost.

Lord Shepherd is a former chairman of the NBC and was no doubt briefed by the company. In the other place he said:

"at the present moment the advisers to the trustees take the view that what the Government are proposing does not rank in any way equivalent to what the members themselves have subscribed for and would have expected to receive on the dissolution of the National Bus Company".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 October 1985; Vol. 467, c. 350.]

Is that right?

I am briefed by the manager of Southern Vectis, who, incidently, is a supporter of privatisation and is not completely opposed to the Bill. In a letter to me he said:

"In the case of NBPF,"—

that is, the National Bus pension fund—

"ten major insurance companies have been approached by the Department of Transport but none would agree to carry on the existing basis of linking pensions to individual salary increases, and we in the Group feel that this is essential if existing pension rights are to be preserved.

In all other cases where nationalised companies have been privatised guarantees have been given by the Government to secure the pensions of current employees and existing pensioners."

I believe that we received that assurance in the other place, but I hope that it will be confirmed.

The letter from the manager of Southern Vectis continues:

"I note from Lord Shepherd's speech on 14 October that Mrs. Lynda Chalker has said that it would be quite immoral for the government in any way to take such action as would reduce the benefits of a scheme.

The present proposals of the Government simply do not go far enough as they do not rank in any way equivalent to what we ourselves have subscribed for and would have expected to receive on the dissolution of National Bus Company. What we are asking is that the government gives guarantees that are equivalent to guarantees at present given by the Trustees of the pension funds of the National Bus Company."

As I understand it, that is what the amendments seek.

I have had experience of what happens when companies are privatised. I am still suffering from the privatisation of Sealink. The latest problem is that pensioners' travel cards issued by British Rail are not being honoured by Sealink, although its competitors are allowing pensioners to travel free. Pensioners from the Isle of Wight have to pay to travel on Sealink although they can travel free on trains at either end of the boat journey. The manager of Sealink has taken a retrograde step about which I have complained bitterly.

That is the sort of thing that has happened, and that will no doubt happen again when the National Bus Company is broken up into smaller companies. The employees of the smaller companies should have priority to enable them to buy shares and take over the companies themselves. That was done with the National Freight Corporation. If it is not done with the National Bus Company, it will be disastrous. Some people want to get their hands on bus companies, not to provide a service to the public, but merely to make a profit. The managers and employees of the bus companies are entitled to a guarantee from the Government that their pensions are safe. We have not yet had that guarantee.

7.15 pm

Mr. Parris: At the end of the day, NBC employees will receive a fair deal, but the Government seem to have

[Mr. Parris]

tied themselves into a Jesuitical knot so that they may give them that deal. As I understand it, for ideological reasons, the Government are unwilling themselves to offer an open-ended, "no worsening", guarantee to a private company. The Government are convinced that there will be no worsening. They want to arrange for the trustees of the pension fund to insure against there being any worsening. The premium for that insurance will have to be paid by the Government.

If insurance proves necessary, apparently it is to come out of the employers' contribution. If so, to the extent that that costs the employers money and commits them to future costs, it will reduce the price for which the National Bus Company can be sold, because it must be sold with the commitment to pay out of the employers' contribution a premium for an insurance scheme against any worsening of the pension scheme. In the end, through its reduced receipts on the sale of NBC, the Government will pay for an insurance policy to provide a guarantee which they themselves are unwilling, partly for ideological reasons, to provide.

If the Government are convinced that there will be no worsening and that the pension scheme is not threatened in any way, it would be cheaper for them to provide the guarantee themselves than to pay a private insurance company to provide it. They will be paying not only for the guarantee but for the BMWs owned by the directors of the insurance companies. All insurance is irrational, except insurance based on the belief that the insurers have incorrectly assessed the risks that are being insured against. If they succeed in persuading the NBC trustees to seek a guarantee privately, the Government will have tied themselves, as I said, into a Jesuitical knot.

Nor am I sure that the trustees will be right in purchasing the premium. Better use of the trustees' funds might be to put them straight into the pension scheme. If the trustees are convinced that the funds are not under threat, it is not right to use them to insure against a threat. It would be better for them to put the money towards the payment of pensions. At the end of it all I do not think that NBC employees have anything to worry about, so I shall support the Government.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): On most of the Bill, especially on the whole idea of privatisation, the Government have thrust upon us ideological views which we do not like, but we must accept that they have a majority.

The amendments suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) seek to prevent the Government using bus men and bus women and their pension funds as pawns of the Government's political will. There is great anger among bus men and bus women about this. The Government will correct me if I am wrong, but I have never known a national strike, as today's action has been, about pensions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan has said, what can bus men and bus women do when no one will listen to them, their unions or their employers? The Government will not even listen to the employers, who have valiantly put the case for the preservation of existing pension rights. My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan has pointed out that it is not the bus men and bus women, the NBC or even the trustees of the pension funds, but the advisers to the trustees — actuaries and accountants versed for a lifetime in pension matters — who have stated categorically that the Government's proposals are worse than the existing scheme.

It is no answer for the Secretary of State to say, as he did, that those advisers do not know what they are talking about. I see the Under-Secretary of State nodding, but I am sure that all Members in the parliamentary pension fund would listen if I, as a trustee, told them what our advisers were saying, as opposed to what the Government's advisers were saying. The NBC and its employees feel exactly the same about what their advisers say.

The amendment merely seeks to ensure that bus men and bus women—drivers, conductors, inspectors, garage staff, the tens of thousands of people in the industry — should receive no worse treatment than the Government have provided when other industries have been privatised. There is no political polemic in this. We are simply fighting for present pension funds and levels of benefit to be preserved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan referred only to the NBC, perhaps due to lack of time. I wish to refer briefly to the PTEs and municipal companies. Their worry is expressed as follows:

> "The current Transport Bill makes provisions for PTEs and municipal transport undertakings to be set up as PLCS which will be deemed to be admissible bodies for inclusion in the Local Government Superannuation Fund. However, as the deeming option is not mandatory and is merely permissive there can be no guarantees that employees being transferred into their new companies will maintain future pension rights."

As a Member sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, I realise that that case bears no comparison with that of the NBC employees, who are really done down by this option. I do not suppose that the Secretary of State will take any notice of the words of Lord Shepherd, a former chairman of the National Bus Company, who has stated without any hesitation that the attempted Standard Life scheme based on a guarantee of RPI plus 1·5 per cent. bears no comparison with the skilful management of the existing scheme, which is based on current wage levels.

If the Government cannot accept our amendments on this last day of term—I appreciate the difficulty in that respect—I plead with them to bring in legislation in the next Session to achieve justice and equity for people who have paid into pension schemes, many of them in private companies even before the NBC was set up, but whose pensions are now in jeopardy because the Government will give no guarantee that their position will not worsen as a result of the Bill.

The Conservatives know that they deal with pensions at their peril. When the Chancellor made noises and flew kites last year about attacks on pension schemes, all of us, and especially Conservative Members, were inundated with letters from people who feared that their pensions might be affected. When the present Secretary of State for Social Services says that he intends to review the state earnings-related pension scheme, the reaction from the country is enormous. The bus men and bus women of this country know that the Government may be tampering with their pension scheme. I must tell the Government that they do that at their peril.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I support the amendments because they seek to do what we have sought to do throughout the proceedings on the Bill—to secure a fair deal for people working in the bus industry.

The action taken by people in this industry today shows their clear belief that even at this late stage the Government have not provided the guarantee of fairness to which those employees are entitled. Last night's *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* quotes Mr. Marshall, general manager of the Burnley and Pendle area, on the subject of the strike. Like most of the employees, whether in management or on the buses, he is cynical about the Government's actions. He is reported as saying:

"I believe the whole protest is futile"

and

"The Government will simply not commit the new bus companies to expensive pension schemes."

The article continues:

"Mr. Marshall added that all pension payments made to the date of the introduction of the new bus companies next year would be fully safeguarded."

We are concerned not just about existing pensions, but about the future pension rights of people in the industry. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) said that the provision that we seek would reduce the selling price of the industry, but why should people working in the industry suffer so that the Government can obtain the maximum price? That is wrong and entirely unacceptable to Labour Members. Those employees should have the guarantees that we have sought for so long.

When the Bill is passed, the bus companies will have to go out to tender and they will face competition from people who do not have to comply with any conditions of employment or service. They will have to face competitors who do not provide adequate pensions, sick pay and all the other benefits to which workers are entitled. It stands to reason, therefore, that the NCB, the PTEs and the municipal undertakings will not be able to win tenders and to remain in business if they do not compete on equal terms. Indeed, the NBC has already withdrawn from the National Joint Council for the Omnibus Industry because it knows that it will have to worsen the conditions of its employees.

7.30 pm

Pensions are important, and more and more people are taking this issue extremely seriously. We know that if the state earnings-related pension scheme is abolished or phased out, the two categories hardest hit will be women and manual workers. People in the bus industry will lose in two ways. They will not have the benefit of a backup from SERPS and a guaranteed minimum pension, and they will also lose their existing scheme. We must take notice of what the trustees and advisers have said, and we must recognise that the trustees have a statutory duty to ensure that the maximum benefit is preserved for the people whom they represent—the employees, those who are already on pension and those who will be on pension in the future.

The amendment is reasonable and fair. Even at this late stage the Government should wake up and accept it. In Committee, a number of hon. Members expressed sympathy, and made all the right sounds, but when it came to the vote they supported the Government. I fear that they will do the same today. I shall be surprised if the Secretary of State for Transport says that he is prepared to accept the amendment, however fair and justified it may be. He is not a reasonable man, and I cannot believe that he will accept the amendment.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I echo the remarks of my hon. Friends when I say that these are unique circumstances. The House, as I understand it, will for the first time be effectively passing legislation which will worsen people's pension prospects. However objectionable previous privatisations may have been, at least pension rights were secured.

My hon. Friends are correct to say that today's industrial action reflects the anger and incredulity which has built up over the last few months among many people in the bus industry. They were opposed to many aspects of the Bill and were staggered by the inanity of much of it. They were opposed to privatisation, but they nevertheless believed that it would be inconceivable for the Government not to leave their pensions "no worse off". Even in the past few days, while the Bill was in another place, it dawned on people that the Government are seriously and cynically not prepared to protect those pensions.

People in the bus industry have expressed anger and incredulity; they do not know what has hit them. They feel outraged that they have been robbed. They are being robbed of all they have contributed over many years—over a whole lifetime in the industry in many cases—by the Government's refusal to creat a "no worse off" position.

Those circumstances are not unique to pensions. I am not sure whether the Secretary of State and his colleagues sincerely believe the nonsense that they have talked about the protection of pensions, and other matters, throughout the Bill's long and sordid history. When the Secretary of State replies I shall ask myself whether he believes the nonsense—the Jesuitical nonsense as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) described it in a Jesuitical speech—that in some obscure way there is protection.

It is extraordinary, as my hon. Friends have said, that the trustees can say that there is no protection, and that the National Bus Company management, from the most senior to the most junior level up and down the country, and everyone involved can say that the assurances given are meaningless and do not create a "no worse off" position.

The Secretary of State has the arrogance to say that the experts do not know what they are talking about and that the whole world does not know what it is talking about. That statement is made by a man who has been in and out of the courts in the past few months and who has been found to have acted illegally on one occasion after another in his job as Secretary of State for Transport. It is extraordinary that someone who has had such a career in the courts with so many judgments against him has the audacity to come here tonight and say that the pension fund trustees do not know what they are talking about when they advise National Bus Company employees.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said, this matter involves not just the NBC. I have an interest in the matter. I am glad that when I came here, I opted to transfer my service as a previous PTE employee in the local government superannuation scheme into the House pension fund. If I had not done that and had retained my service, I should be worried about what would happen.

[Mr. Bob Clay]

A clause which states merely that something "may be" held in a local government superannuation fund is nothing like the same as a clause which says that it "must be" held.

The Secretary of State must be aware that local managers in various parts of the country, not just in the NBC but in PTEs and municipalities, are already saying informally and, in some cases, formally, to their trade unions, "You know that we shall be unable to maintain the value of pensions. We are not certain that the future company will stay in the local government superannuation scheme. It will depend upon the competition. If we are competing with people who do not provide that kind of pension, how do you expect us to provide it?" That gives the lie to the assurances that are being given by the Government. They must be aware of that, and of the fact that those things are being said.

The Government must also be aware that all the nonsense that was talked about the Bill creating employment has already been given the lie because Northern General Transport, even before the Act has received the Royal Assent, has formally told its trade unions that it will dismiss 25 per cent. of its staff. That is a most extraordinary example of how all the nonsense that was discussed in Committee and on Report is contradicted by what is already taking place.

I recall the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) making a long and detailed speech on Report in which he took apart every detail of the misleading impressions being given by the Under-Secretary and others. He quoted chapter and verse. He said that many of the things that the Minister claimed that he had said or written were untrue. The hon. Member said that the only way he could conclude that what was happening was not fraud was to assume that it was gross incompetence. That came from a Conservative Member. He was listened to by two or three other Conservative Members, two of whom voted with the Opposition, as did the hon. Member for Wellingborough. However, when the Bell rang, the Lobby fodder came flooding through to defeat the Opposition amendments. No doubt the same will happen tonight.

Bus men, bus women and many other workers will notice the House's final disgusting hypocrisy. It has its own pension scheme, which must be one of the best available to anyone anywhere. In July 1983, the House improved that pension scheme but it is apparently not going to find itself able tonight to prevent the Government from robbing NBC, PTE and municipal employees of their pension rights.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): We do not need a nasty turn of mind to consider what the Secretary of State has in store for the transport workers. Wherever he goes there is despondency, unhappiness and misery. The workers tremble whenever the Prime Minister suggests a new office for him. There is heartache in the country because the people know his state of mind. We do not need a nasty approach because there is the record.

It is the Secretary of State's Bill. He listens to no one. All the advice that has been made available to him has been swept aside. He has arbitrarily deprived transport industry workers of their pension expectations and rights. He has a responsibility to tell the House what is inhibiting him from acting reasonably. What is stopping him from applying a provision for the maintenance of pension rights for transport workers in the same way as it has been accorded to other people who have gone into the private sector? What actuarial basis is there for his resistace to what is reasonable?

How many Conservative Members will go to their constituencies this weekend—there is plenty of time, as we prorogue tomorrow — and address the transport undertakings that will be privatised? Will they say to them, "We fought for your pension rights," or "We spoke in Standing Committee," or "We spoke in the House of Commons"? Will they say that they put the case sympathetically on their behalf? But they will omit to say that they went into the wrong Lobby.

What is the position of the Conservative party—the caring party, as they like to tell the nation, but the uncaring party, as the nation has learned? Having taken that arbitrary action, is not the Secretary of State conscience-striken that he has not taken the opportunity that was there for other people transferred from the public sector to private enterprise? The opportunity to do what is right for transport workers is there, but for some reason he is not taking it.

The House is entitled to know the position. Either there are some strong arguments that we have not yet heard that support his view or there is a doctrinal, rigid or dogmatic approach, in which the Secretary of State has shown no sensitivity. We have reasonable men and women working in the transport industry and some of the highest standards of transportation in the public sector. I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the havoc that will come from privatisation.

There is an employment problem for the workers in the transport industry, apart from their pension problem. All at once the Conservative Government have decided that there must be a state of unsettlement in the transport industry and a state of denial for the workers. Is some spite or prejudice being exercised here? Although I do not agree with the principle of privatisation, why is the favourable, sustainable, and reasonable treatment for one section of the public service that has been transferred to the private sector not applied to another? Why are the Government behaving differently towards so many thousands of people who provide an excellent public service for their community?

Let me put in a caveat. Privatisation has caused problems on our roads. There is an inquiry going on, so I cannot comment on it, but we must bear in mind the consequences of the transport measures we have had in the past two or three years. We not only have congestion on the roads but the Government's expression of concern is constipated. The Government will not respond to reasonable submissions in Standing Committee and elsewhere, to get the best out of the Government's overall principle, that come hell or high water they will privatise. The Minister could get his own way on privatisation, but he must respond to the consequences, and if he believes that some people will suffer when he does not intend them to suffer, let him say so.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House those things now, because Conservative Members have to go to their constituencies? I hope that all the transport workers will nobble them. Two years after the vote, they might have got over it. Conservative Members are entitled to learn from the Secretary of State what is the case for not giving the transport workers their pension rights, no more or less than before. We are not asking for any hand-outs. We are

asking for nothing other than what has been actuarially decided upon — a valuable pension scheme, to be sustained when the Secretary of State hit transport workers out of the public sector into the private sector.

Will the Secretary of State spell out the reasons why he cannot allow us to have this reasonable amendment? Are there any practical difficulties, or has he decided, meaning that that is the end of the matter?

7.45 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I shall be extremely brief, because the arguments on both sides have been more than adequately rehearsed and because I am sure many hon. Members will be keen to get off to their supper.

I appreciate the points made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his correspondence to me on this subject. Despite that, rightly or wrongly, much concern has been expressed in my constituency over the pensions issue. Bus men from depots in Langley Mill and Alfreton have taken a great deal of trouble courteously to explain and put their fears to him. I accept, although there are strong arguments on both sides, that their concern is genuine and not politically motivated. I feel that my right hon. Friend should have given the same guarantees to National Bus workers as were given to workers after previous denationalisations. Therefore, I shall not support the Government in this case, although I must say that the specious arguments of Opposition Members nearly made me change my mind.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): It is absolutely astounding that some hon. Members should give their supper a higher priority than workers' pension rights. However, I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has decided that he cannot support the Government on this issue.

The points against the Government have all been made by my hon. Friends. It is scandalous for any Secretary of State to treat any group of workers in this fashion, particularly considering that many thousands of transport workers have given a lifetime of loyal service to the public transport industry. It is scandalous that they will not even be allowed to retire with the guarantee of a decent pension. In some areas, with certain provisions, they might have the pension rights that we are seeking to guarantee, but that will be left to local variants, and in many cases they might not have proper pension rights.

I should like to re-emphasise the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) in respect of PTE employees. I welcome the fact that the PLCs that will be set up will be deemed to be admissible for inclusion into the local government superannuation scheme. However, the failure to make that mandatory is unjust and heartless to the extreme. If it is worth while to include the provision in the Bill, why not make it mandatory? I appeal to the Secretary of State, even at this late hour, to make it mandatory. If he cannot do it tonight, will he take steps to do it as soon as possible? If not, why not? How can he justify such a cruel decision? Can he not change his mind at the last minute and make the provision mandatory?

Mr. Ridley: I want to make it clear that I thoroughly share the views of all hon. Members that this is a very important matter, which has been rightly discussed at every stage during the Bill's progress both in the House and in another place. I want to try once more to persuade Opposition Members that they have not entirely grasped what is going on and that they are wrong in many of their allegations.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) referred to local government pensions. It is clear that they do not understand that any accrued rights of bus men employed in local government are safeguarded. Accrued rights for past service will remain in the local government scheme up to the time of seperation.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) was wrong when he said that he had been wise to move his pension into the House of Commons scheme. It would have been equally safe in the local government scheme. We are discussing future arrangements for local government pensions, not accrued rights. That is an illustration of how some hon. Members have not grasped the point.

Future benefits in the National Bus Company are a different issue. The debate has been about accrued rights in the NBC scheme.

> "It is not our policy to affect any existing pension rights—that is, pension entitlements that employees have already earned and paid for through their contributions. The Bill contains nothing that would have that effect, and it would be wrong if it did." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 18 March 1982; c. 345.]

Since many hon. Members have quoted my hon. Friend the Minister of State, I should tell the House that that is a quotation from her speech on the 1982 Bill. I feel that I am justified in repeating it in this debate.

I shall take a little time to go through what has happened, because I am sure that hon. Members mean it when they say that they want to be reassured. Throughout I have stressed the importance of ensuring that the assets of the funds are adequate to meet their liabilities. It is the Government's clear undertaking to ensure that any deficiencies in the funds are eliminated at the time of privatisation following a fresh actuarial valuation on a prudent and reasonable basis. In Committee, many hon. Members and trustees did not think that that was sufficient assurance. They argued that something further should be done so that trustees would have more security to offer their members. Always helpful, I proposed that private sector insurance of the fund should be examined. I did that on Report, and not recently, as the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) alleged.

That insurance is not in some way purchased by the Government, as the hon. Member seemed to suggest. It is a way by which the trustees could seek to ensure that their funds are adequate for their responsibilities for many years to come. Throughout the summer recess my Department and the trustees of the NBC and their advisers pursued these matters with insurance companies. The result has been that private sector insurance is available to assure present funds at a price within their reach. In other words, it should be possible for the trustees to provide for members one or more of the household names in the insurance industry as security for the benefit that members have built up. That option is now available.

Nevertheless, the trustees faced further difficulties. They might want to purchase the insurance now, which would have the effect that the House wants, but how could

[Mr. Ridley]

they be sure that they could also cover by insurance the extra benefits that would accrue in the scheme over the next few years until privatisation is completed? Indeed, it might also be difficult to buy insurance straight away because some of the pension funds' assets, particularly property, might be difficult to realise and to turn quickly into cash to pay to the insurance company. Those difficulties were encountered during the summer.

However, the Government met the problem by making an offer to the trustees through the NBC and proposed that the company should make cash available to the trustees, in the form of a bridging loan, so that they could purchase insurance now if they wished, although they may not have sufficient liquid assets to do so.

We further proposed that the NBC should make available, through the employer's pension contributions, such further finance as may be necessary to ensure insurance cover over the next few years up to the end of the disposal programme. In this way, the trustees can now offer their members the certainty that has been asked for by hon. Members throughout our proceedings on the Bill. It is now available to the trustees to offer as they wish.

I take exception to the hon. Members who have alleged that accrued rights will be cut down, eroded or threatened. Worse still, Mr. Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers Union was asked on Radio Four last week:

"But they won't lose the benefits that they've already accrued?"

He replied:

"Yes, in some instances there will be massive reductions of the pension benefits already earned by people employed in the National Bus Company."

That is not so, as I have demonstrated. It cannot be so. When the leader of the union says that there will be massive reductions in benefits, I do not find it surprising that great alarm, fear and despondency have been stirred up among bus men about their pensions.

Mr. Stott: I am listening closely to the Secretary of State. The kernel of the issue is whether the trustees, who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the NBC pension fund is adequate for the purposes for which it was set up, accept what the right hon. Gentleman says about the new plan that he has devised.

Mr. Ridley: I will answer that question, but I wish first to refer to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris). In a sense, he is right, in that the commitment to buy insurance will cost something, which will increase the financial exposure of the NBC and thus of the Government. However, I have always made it clear that the Government were prepared to ensure that sufficient money was made available to ensure the adequacy of the pension fund. This is the form in which such a pledge will be implemented if that is what the trustees decide to do.

My hon. Friend's argument is faulty, because if the Government gave a guarantee at the taxpayers' expense, that would save the insurance premium, but the saving would go not to the Government, but to the fund and, therefore, it would be an unequal transaction.

We think it right to propose that the benefits in one of the schemes, which are currently linked to average national earnings, should instead be linked to the rise in retail prices plus 1·5 per cent. and not just to the rise in the retail price index, as Mr. Morris and some Opposition Members seem to think.

I have had an analysis done of which has been better over the past 10 years—the earnings index or retail prices plus 1·5 per cent. In five of the years, one was better and in the other five years, the other was better. I believe that the difference is equivalent. It would make the insurance more cost effective and it would give the fund member the certainty of a fixed percentage over and above prices. The benefits to be obtained from the insurance option are at least equivalent, therefore, and in many circumstances could be said to be better. One of those circumstances would be if we ever had the disaster of an Alliance or a Labour Government. I am certain that we would all rather have 1·5 per cent. more than RPI, than earnings under them. There could be many times when it would be wiser to go for RPI plus 1·5 per cent.

8 pm

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) referred to the advisers to the pension fund trustees. I think that he was trying to make the point that the Department's suggestion on how to secure insurance might lay them open to legal challenge. I can only tell him that my legal advice is that that is not so. I do not know of advice other than that which they have received, but I can say that this basic choice exists for the trustees, because it is they who are responsible for these funds and for paying the pensions, the accrued rights. They can take some form of insurance option to give that extra security which many hon. Members have sought, my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) prominent among them.

Or the trustees will be able to say, "We are better fund managers and we can be sure that the funds that we have set up will be adequate to provide that security because we believe that we are cleverer than an insurance company." Then they will have taken the responsibility to themselves. The responsibility in this matter lies not with the Government but with the trustees of the pension funds.

This brings me to all the examples quoted by the hon. Gentleman on the Opposition Benches — British Telecom, British Airways, Sealink and many other firms that have been or will be privatised. In not one single case has a Government guarantee been given to the pension fund. It has always been recognised that the trustees are the people who are responsible. In no case has a Government guarantee be given nor will it be given in the future. The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) is therefore quite wrong. These employees are receiving treatment which is identical to that given to the pension assets of every other group of privatised workers.

I could say that we have gone far further in relation to the bus men's pensions than with any other group of privatised workers because we have taken immense trouble to facilitate the provision of insurance, if they wish it, and to make sure that the funds will be adequate to buy that insurance, if that is what the trustees prefer.

An occupational pension is not a pension produced or guaranteed by Government, not even in the nationalised industries. Even if the National Bus Company were to remain in the public sector, the Government would not guarantee its pension funds. There is, therefore, a complete difference between what the Opposition are

seeking, which is a Government guarantee of a private pension fund, and the reality of security, which is what the bus men actually want.

The measures that I have outlined give the option of that very full security. I should have thought it more likely that some of the great insurance companies of this country would still be solvent long after the country had gone bankrupt under a Labour Government. I would rather have a guarantee from the Standard Life company than from any conceivable Labour Government. If we are talking about security, that is where security comes. I will therefore ask Opposition Members to stop trying to frighten the bus men, to make them fear for their own pensions, in order to make these cheap political points against the Bill. I ask the House to reject their amendments.

Mr. Stott: Although this has been a very interesting debate, sadly we have made little progress in persuading the Secretary of State of the very genuine fears in the industry regarding pension provisions. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris), to use his own phraseology—turned round on him by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay)—made a very Jesuitical speech. Those of us who have served on Standing Committees with him over the past few years are used to his making that kind of speech. He is a past master at walking on barbed wire. According to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill, (Mr. Craigen), he is the only person who could talk himself out of his own arguments. There was more than a grain of truth in what the hon. Gentleman said, and in his approach to this serious matter he demonstrated the way in which, in conscience, he ought to vote on this issue.

Not so his hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) who is taking the middle road out of all this. He believes neither the Secretary of State nor me, so he will not support either of us. He will sit on his hands. If he thinks that that is going to save him from ignominious defeat at the next election, I must tell him that it will not because there is a great deal of resentment among people in the transport industry.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): If the hon. Member is a sporting man, I will be quite happy to take a bet on his statement.

Mr. Stott: We will see about that. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have as much concern, or more concern, with this matter and the other matters that we will debate before 10 o'clock, when I have to go to my supper.

The Secretary of State has outlined the way in which he has moved. I concede that he has moved on this matter. He has moved because he has been forced to do so, because we have highlighted the difficulties and the seething resentment about this matter in the transport industry. Yet the Secretary of State has still not got the message. I will put a forthright question: do the trustees of the National Bus Company's pension fund accept what he says and agree with him? They do not. They do not believe that what he proposes will be beneficial to the members of the pension fund.

The Secretary of State had the audacity to say that he had taken legal advice. This is the man who has been before the courts of this country, not once, not twice, but three times, on the legal advice of his officials, and been found guilty on every count of being irrational and irresponsible and of acting illegally. Even today, the High Court has overturned his own legal advice on an appeal against the GLC lorry ban. We cannot take seriously the Secretary of State's legal advice or the way in which he interprets these matters.

We have tried persuasion. We have tried argument. We have tried to put forward the views expressed to us by the thousands of people who will be affected by this legislation. The Secretary of State has taken no notice of the most important issue concerning them. I am left with no option but to invite my hon. Friends to come into the Lobby with me and vote in favour of the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Perhaps it would be helpful if I remind the House that we are now dealing with Lords amendment No. 81. I will ask the hon. Gentleman, when we get to amendment (a), which will be after the Lords amendment No. 90, to move the amendment formally for a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 82 and 83 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 84, in page 44, line 38, after "under" insert "the preceding provisions of".

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 85, in page 44, line 38, at end insert—

"(12) The Secretary of State may by order dissolve any company which is a subsidiary of the Bus Company and incorporated by local Act or by an order under the Light Railways Act 1896.

(13) An order made under subsection (12) above may provide for the disposal of any remaining property, rights or liabilities of the company dissolved and may contain such supplementary, incidental and consequential provisions (including the repeal of any statutory provision) as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient."

Mr. Mitchell: The amendment deals with some remnants of history. It provides the Secretary of State with an order-making power to disolve subsidiaries of the NCB that are statutory companies constituted under local Acts of Parliament or an order under the Light Railways Act 1896. There are three such NCB subsidiaries. All are dormant companies, and it is highly unlikely that any private purchaser would want to acquire them, particularly as at least one of them would have a duty to provide certain services. The preferred solution is therefore to dissolve them by order.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 85 agreed to.

Clause 49

THE BUS COMPANY'S POWERS OF DISPOSAL

Lords amendment: No. 86, in page 46, line 12, leave out from beginning to first "the" in line 13 and insert "any subsidiary of theirs".

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 87, in page 46, line 15, leave out "any of their subsidiaries" and insert "that subsidiary".

Mr. Mitchell: These are drafting amendments to simplify clause 49(3) which enables the NCB to set up an

[Mr. Mitchell]

employee share scheme when it disposes of a subsidiary. The clause inadvertently provides for an employee share scheme to be established in one subsidiary as part of the sale of a different subsidiary. Therefore, the amendments are necessary to remove that anomaly.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 87, 88, 89 and 90 agreed to.

Clause 53

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Lords amendment: No. 91, page 49, line 11, at end insert—

"(6A) Without prejudice to the generality of section 47(1)*(c)* of this Act, the arrangements there mentioned may include provision for the making by the Company of payments in compensation for any loss, reduction or limitation of any such concession, benefit or privilege as is mentioned in subsection (6) above to the extent that provision in respect of the loss, reduction or limitation is not made by virtue of that subsection.".

Read a Second time.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment, in line 3, leave out 'may' and insert 'must'.—*[Mr. Stott.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 234.

Division No. 306] **[8.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David

Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S'Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendments No. 91 and 92 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 93, in page 51, line 32, after "(5)" insert

", as it applies to England and Wales"

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take the following Lords amendments: No. 94, in page 51, line 34, at end insert—

(bb) in subsection (5), as it applies to Scotland, for the word "designated" there shall be substituted the words "passenger transport",".

No. 96, in page 52, line 16, leave out from beginning to "and" in line 17.

No. 334, in page 133, line 9, after ("1") insert ("*(a)* to *(d)* and *(f)*").

No. 401, in page 152, line 10, after "paragraphs 1" insert "*(a)* to *(d)* and *(f)*"

Mr. Ridley: These amendments reinstate section 9(5) of the Transport Act 1968. That provision, which allows district councils to assist a PTE, and vice versa, was proposed to be repealed as it applies to Scotland because Scottish district councils no longer have transport functions. However, as a result of representations from the Strathclyde PTE, that under this power they enter into agreements with district councils for such matters as the cleaning and maintenance of bus shelters, it was decided to reinstate section 9(5) for Scotland, with a minor drafting change to alter the description of the area from "designated" to "passenger transport".

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 94 to 96 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 52, line 19, leave out second "section" and insert "sections"

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take the following Lords amendments: No. 101, in page 54, line 26, after "section" insert

"and section 9B of this Act"

No. 103, in page 54, line 29, leave out "to the operator of" and insert

"*(b)* references in this section and that section to the operator of, or to persons operating"

No. 104, in page 54, line 31, insert new clause—*Consultation and publicity with respect to policies as to services.*—

" . — (1) When considering from time to time the formulation of policies for the purposes of section 9A(1) of this Act, the Authority for a passenger transport area shall consult—

(a) with every Passenger Transport Authority, county council or regional council whose area may be affected by those policies; and

(b) either with persons operating public passenger transport services within their area or with organisations appearing to the Authority to be representative of such persons;

and where the passenger transport area is in England and Wales the Authority shall also consult with the councils of the districts

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

comprised in that area about the requirements for transport arising out of or in connection with the exercise and performance by those councils of their functions as local education authorities or of their social services functions.

(2) As soon as practicable after any occasion when they formulate new or altered policies for those purposes, the Authority concerned shall publish a statement of all policies so formulated by them on that or any previous occasion which for the time being apply in relation to the performance by the Executive for their area of their duty to secure services under section 9A(3).

(3) When the Authority publish such a statement, they shall send a copy of the statement—

(a) to each Authority or council whom they were required to consult under subsection (1)*(a)* above; and

(b) to each of the persons or (as the case may be) organisations whom they consulted under subsection (1)*(b)* above;

in relation to the formulation of their policies on the occasion in question.

(4) The Authority shall also—

(a) cause a copy of the statement last published by them under subsection (2) above to be made available for inspection (at all reasonable hours) at such places as they think fit; and

(b) give notice, by such means as they think expedient for bringing it to the attention of the public, as to the places at which a copy of that statement may be inspected.""inspected.""

Amendment *(a)* to the proposed Lords amendment No. 104, after subsection (1)*(b)*, insert—

"*(c)* with persons resident in the areas affected by such policies".

No. 125, in clause 61, page 59, line 43, at end insert—

"(3A) In formulating policies under subsection (1)*(b)* or (2)*(b)* above with respect to the descriptions of services they propose to secure under subsection (1)*(a)* or (2)*(a)* above, a council shall have regard to any measures they are required or propose to take for meeting any transport requirements in exercise or performance of—

(a) any of their functions as a local education authority or (as the case may be) as an education authority; or

(b) any of their social services or (as the case may be) social work functions."

No. 126, in page 60, line 1, leave out subsection (4).

No. 132, after clause 61, insert the following new clause — *Consultation and publicity with respect to policies as to services*—

".—(1) When considering from time to time the formulation of policies for the purposes of section 61(1)*(b)* or (2)*(b)* of this Act, any council to whom either of those provisions applies shall consult—

(a) with every Passenger Transport Authority, county council or regional or islands council whose area may be affected by those policies; and

(b) either with persons operating public passenger transport services within their area or with organisations appearing to the council to be representative of such persons;

and where the council's area is in England and Wales the council shall also consult with the councils of districts comprised in their area.

(2) As soon as practicable after any occasion when they formulate new or altered policies for those purposes, any such council shall publish a statement of all policies so formulated by them on that or any previous occasion which they propose for the time being to follow in the performance of their duty to secure services under section 61(1)*(a)* or (as the case may be) under section 61(2)*(a)*.

(3) When any such council publish such a statement, they shall send a copy of the statement—

(a) to each Authority or council whom they were required to consult under subsection (1)*(a)* above; and

(b) to each of the persons or (as the case may be) organisations whom they consulted under subsection (1)*(b)* above;

in relation to the formulation of their policies on the occasion in question.

(4) The council shall also—

(a) cause a copy of the statement last published by them under subsection (2) above to be made available for inspection (at all reasonable hours) at such places as they think fit; and

(b) give notice, by such means as they think expedient for bringing it to the attention of the public, as to the places at which a copy of that statement may be inspected."

Amendment *(a)* to the proposed Lords amendment No. 132, after subsection (1)*(b)* insert—

"*(c)* with persons resident in the areas affected by such policies".

No. 213, in clause 82, page 82, line 30, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

"*(b)* of all authorities who are—

(i) local education authorities in England and Wales or education authorities in Scotland, or

(ii) local authorities exercising, in England and Wales, social services functions or, in Scotland, social work functions;

in relation to any expenditure on transport for the purposes of or in connection with the exercise and performance of their functions as local education authorities or education authorities or (as the case may be) of their social services or social work functions;"

No. 214, in page 82, line 37, at end insert—

"(2A) In subsection (2)*(b)*(ii) above "local authority" means—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, an authority who are a local authority for the purposes of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, an authority who are a local authority for the purposes of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968."

No. 285, in clause 120, page 117, line 12, at end insert—

""securities", in relation to a body corporate, means any shares, stock, debentures, debenture stock, and any other security of a similar nature, of the body corporate;

page 132, line 2, at end insert—

""social services functions" means functions which are social services functions for the purposes of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970;

"social work functions" means functions which are social work functions for the purposes of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968;"

Mr. Ancram: I believe that these changes will be welcomed in all parts of the House. They place new duties on authorities to consult about their transport policies, to publish a statement of those policies and to liaise with one another to secure better co-ordination between social services, education and transport authorities on how best to meet all their transport requirements. When it left the House, the Bill contained certain consultation duties on county, regional and island councils, but not on PTAs, and co-operation duties on education and transport but not on social services authorities.

These amendments fill those gaps. They also ensure that county, regional and island councils which exercise all three functions must equally have regard to all their responsibilities when drawing up their transport policies. It was impressed upon my right hon. Friend in Standing Committee that a requirement on authorities to publish a statement of policies would usefully improve accountability to the electorate. These amendments do that while avoiding unnecessary burdens on authorities. The amendments also require PTAs, county, regional and island councils to consult each other where their policies may affect each other's areas. I am sure that this will be welcomed by authorities and passengers alike.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 98, in page 52, line 21, leave out subsections (1) to (4) and insert—

"(1) It shall be the duty of the Authority for any passenger transport area to formulate from time to time general policies with respect to the descriptions of public passenger transport services they consider it appropriate for the Executive for their area to secure for the purpose of meeting any public transport requirements within their area which in the view of the Authority would not be met apart from any action taken by the Executive for that purpose.

(2) The Authority shall seek and have regard to the advice of the Executive for their area in formulating their policies under subsection (1) of this section.

(3) It shall be the duty of the Executive for any passenger transport area to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as they consider it appropriate to secure for meeting any public transport requirements within their area in accordance with policies formulated by the Authority for their area under subsection (1) of this section.

(4) The Executive shall have power to enter into an agreement providing for service subsidies for the purpose of securing the provision of any service under subsection (3) of this section; but their power to do so—

(a) shall be exercisable only where the service in question would not be provided without subsidy; and

(b) is subject to sections 83 to 86 of the Transport Act 1985 (tendering for local services, etc.)."

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take the following Lords amendments: No. 122, in clause 61, page 59, line 28, after "county" insert

"which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose;".

No. 123, in page 59, line 38, after "area" insert

"which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose;".

No. 124, in page 59, line 42, leave out subsection (3).

No. 127, in page 60, line 12, leave out subsections (5) and (6) and insert—

"(5) A non-metropolitan district council in England and Wales shall have power to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as they consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within their area which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose.

(6) For the purpose of securing the provision of any service under subsection (1)*(a)* or (2)*(a)* or (as the case may be) under subsection (5) above any council shall have power to enter into an agreement providing for service subsidies; but their power to do so—

(a) shall be exercisable only where the service in question would not be provided without subsidy; and

(b) is subject to sections 83 to 86 of this Act.".

No. 329, in schedule 3, page 130, line 2, leave out sub-paragraph *(a)* and insert—

"*(a)* subsection (1)*(a)* shall be omitted;"

No. 330, in page 130, line 15, leave out paragraph 11 and insert—

"11. In section 15A of that Act (control of Executive by Authority) subsection (1) shall be omitted.".

No. 331, in page 130, line 37, leave out "(1)" and insert "(3)".

No. 336, in page 133, line 31, leave out "(1)" and insert "(3)".

No. 390, in schedule 7, page 150, line 34, column 3, after "15" insert "subsection (1)*(a)*,".

No. 391, in page 150, line 46, column 3, at end insert "Section 15A(1).".

Mr. Ridley: These amendments have an important purpose. On Report in another place the Government were asked to remove any possible scope for misunderstanding about the roles of the PTA and the PTE which could conceivably arise from the drafting of the Bill. The amendments seek to state the roles of the authority and its executive more clearly. I hope that the House will welcome it if I describe briefly what those roles are.

The PTA will be responsible for assessing the transport requirements which exist within its area. It will also be responsible for formulating general policies about the descriptions of services which should be secured to meet those requirements. It will then be the responsibility of the executive, the PTE, to secure the services which, in its professional judgment, it believes to be appropriate to implement the policies of the authority. It will have the power to do so by entering into agreements for service subsidies, subject to the tendering provisions of the Bill, but this power is to be exercised in accordance with the authority's general policies. The amendments also make clear the responsibilities of non-metropolitan authorities. If any hon. Member would like me to do so, I can go into those at length.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 99 to 106 agreed to.

Clause 58

TRANSFER OF BUS UNDERTAKINGS OF EXECUTIVES TO COMPANIES OWNED BY AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 107, in page 55, line 20, leave out paragraph *(a)* and insert—

"*(a)* activities of any description carried on by the Executive in or for the purposes of the provision of any service for the carriage of passengers by road currently provided by the Executive in exercise of any of their powers under section 10(1) of the 1968 Act, and"

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take the following Lords amendments: No. 108, in page 55, line 23, leave out from "with" to end of line 24 and insert

"any activities within paragraph *(a)* above or to be capable of being conveniently carried on in association with any such activities.".

No. 160, in clause 69, page 71, line 1, at beginning insert

"Subject to subsection (5) below".

No. 161, in page 71, line 4, leave out

"other than transferred activities".

No. 166, in page 71, line 17, leave out

"other than transferred activities".

No. 167, in page 71, line 22, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

"(5) Subsection (3)*(a)* above shall not apply—

(a) in the case of a public transport company whose controlling authority are the Passenger Transport Authority for any passenger transport area, in relation to activities within the powers of the Executive for that area or activities which were formerly within those powers but have ceased to be so by virtue of any order made under section 59 of this Act;

(b) in the case of a public transport company within section 68(1)*(c)* of this Act, in relation to activities which were formerly within the powers of the council who formed, or of any council who participated in forming that company, but have ceased to be so by virtue of section 62(1) of this Act.".

Mr. Mitchell: These amendments are carefully designed to meet points which were made not only by hon. Members but in another place. Some concern was

[Mr. Mitchell]

expressed about the Bill's requirement for PTEs to form a company for the purpose of carrying passengers by road within, to and from, but not completely outside, their areas. The Government initially had doubts about whether this phrase would prevent the initial company from maintaining services outside its area, which, for historical reasons, the PTE had assumed responsibility for and had confirmed that it would provide. We carefully considered the arguments that were put to us, particularly in relation to the services run by the Greater Manchester PTE in Glossop and agreed that there might be some doubt about the position.

These amendments were tabled to put an end to that doubt. They make it clear that the initial company should be formed to provide any of the services now carried out by the PTE, including any outside its area. They also make quite sure that the new company will have adequate scope to make alterations to the services which it provides, including the provision of related new services, by classifying a later clause to make it clear that the company may engage in any activities, including new ones, which can conveniently be carried on in association with the executive's existing activities. I am sure that hon. Members will be glad to have a constructive response from the Government to a genuine doubt which arose during the passage of the Bill.

8.30 pm

Mr. Parris: Derbyshire county council was concerned about possible misunderstandings arising under the Bill. It will be pleased at the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 108 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 109, in page 55, line 26, leave out "1948" and insert "1985"

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with Lords said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 114, in page 58, line 8, leave out "1948" and insert "1985".

No. 118, in page 58, line 36, leave out "1948" and insert "1985".

No. 138, in clause 63, page 63, line 14, leave out "1948" and insert "1985".

No. 194, in clause 72, page 75, line 27, leave out

"161 of the Companies Act 1948"

and insert

"389 of the Companies Act 1985".

No. 196, in page 76, line 12, leave out

"161 of the Companies Act 1948"

and insert

"389 of the Companies Act 1985".

No. 283, in clause 120, page 116, line 20, leave out from "in" to the end of line 22 and insert "the Companies Act 1985".

No. 286, in page 117, line 22, leave out

"154 of the Companies Act 1948"

and insert

"736 of the Companies Act 1985".

No. 380, in schedule 6, page 148, line 44, leave out

"161 of the Companies Act 1948"

and insert

"389 of the Companies Act 1985".

Mr. Mitchell: The amendments simply update references in the Bill to the Companies Act 1948, as a result of this enactment and the coming into force of the new consolidated Companies Act 1985. The amendments are technical.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 110, in page 55, line 33, leave out from "theirs" to end of line 35 and insert

"which it appears to the Executive to be appropriate to transfer to that company".

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 111, in page 56, line 22, leave out "held by them"

No. 112, in page 56, line 23, at end insert—

"(8A) Where—

(a) the property, rights and liabilities transferred under subsection (7) above include the whole of the undertaking of any wholly-owned subsidiary of the Executive; and

(b) it appears to the Executive that no further action is required on the part of that subsidiary to perfect any transfer under that subsection;

the Executive shall secure that that subsidiary is wound up.".

No. 113, in clause 60, page 57, line 45, at end insert—

"(1A) Where the initial company has any wholly-owned subsidiaries, the proposals may, instead of or (as the case may be) in addition to providing for the transfer to any one or more of those companies of the shares in or other securities of any such subsidiary comprised in the initial company's undertaking, provide for—

(a) the division among those companies; or

(b) the transfer to any one of them;

of the whole or any part of the undertaking, or of any property, rights or liabilities of, that subsidiary.".

No. 115, in page 58, line 10, leave out

"is to be divided among the transferee companies"

and insert—

", and the whole or any part of the undertaking of any wholly-owned subsidiary of the initial company to which the proposals relate, is to be divided among the transferee companies or (as the case may be) transferred in accordance with the proposals to any one of those companies;".

No. 116, in page 58, line 12, leave out from "company" to end of line 14 and insert—

", and of any wholly-owned subsidiary of the initial company the whole of whose undertaking is to be transferred in accordance with the proposals to any one or more of the transferee companies, on completion of the transfer of that company's or (as the case may be) of that subsidiary's undertaking.".

No. 117, in page 58, line 20, after "company" insert—

"and of any wholly-owned subsidiary of the initial company".

No. 119, in page 59, line 2, leave out

"comprised in the part of the initial company's undertaking"

and insert—

", and of any wholly-owned subsidiary of the initial company, which are".

No. 120, in page 59, line 21, at end insert—

"(12) Subsection (11) above shall apply in relation to any subsidiary of the initial company the whole of whose undertaking is transferred under the scheme to one or more of the transferee companies as it applies in relation to the initial company.".

No. 162, in clause 69, page 71, line 6, at end insert

"or permit any body corporate which is its subsidiary to engage in any such activities".

No. 163, in page 71, leave out lines 7 to 9 and insert—

"*(b)* does not—

(i) borrow money from any person other than the controlling authority; or

(ii) permit any body corporate which is its subsidiary to borrow money from any person other than the company, any other subsidiary of the company, or the controlling authority, with the exception in each case of borrowing by way of temporary loan or overdraft, and".

No. 164, in page 71, line 10, after "not" insert "(i)".

No. 165, in page 71, line 11, at end insert—

"; or

(ii) permit any body corporate which is its subsidiary to raise money by the issue of shares or stock to any person other than the company.".

No. 168, in clause 70, page 71, line 39, leave out "a paid employee of the company" and insert—

"paid for acting as such or is an employee of the public transport company or a subsidiary of the public transport company."

No. 173, in page 72, line 6, after "council" insert "(a)".

No. 174, in page 72, line 7, leave out from "with" to "vote" in line 9 and insert—

", or any other matter relating to the activities of, the public transport company or a subsidiary of that company; or

(b) ".

No. 175, in page 72, line 36, leave out from beginning to "was" in line 1 of page 73 and insert—

", or any other matter relating to the activities of the company concerned".

No. 179, page 73, line 11, leave out from "with" to "is" in line 12 and insert—

", or any other matter relating to the activities of, the public transport company or a subsidiary of that company".

No. 186, in page 73, line 35, leave out from "with" to "by" in line 36 and insert—

", or in any other matter relating to the activities of, the public transport company or a subsidiary of that company".

No. 187, in page 73, line 37, at end insert—

"or in a subsidiary of that company.

(12) The provisions of this section shall apply in relation to a director of a subsidiary of a public transport company as they apply in relation to a director of such a company.".

No. 190, in clause 71, page 74, leave out lines 12 and 13 and insert—

"such shares or other securities.".

No. 191 page 74, line 18, leave out from beginning to "which" in line 20 and insert—

(a) the disposal by that company of the whole of that company's undertaking;

(b) any disposal by that company of any shares in or other securities of a body corporate which is that company's subsidiary; or

(c) any disposal by that company of any part of that company's undertaking, or of any assets of that company (other than shares or securities within paragraph *(b)* above)".

No 197, in clause 72, page 76, line 21, leave out "wholly-owned". No. 198 in clause 74, page 76, leave out line 27 and insert—

", or with any subsidiary of an associated company, for the provision by that Executive or council for that company or (as the case may be) for that subsidiary".

No. 201, in clause 76, page 78, line 16, leave out from "section" to end of line 17.

No. 272 in clause 113, page 111, line 15, leave out "a" and insert "the whole or any".

Mr. Mitchell: The amendments concern subsidiary companies. They ensure that the Bill provides the proper range of powers and controls to cater for any subsidiary formed by a PTE or by a public transport company owned by a PTE or district council.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 111 to 120 agreed to.

New Clause

PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS ON TRANSFER AND DIVISION OF BUS UNDERTAKINGS

Lords amendment No. 121, after clause 60, insert the following new Clause— *Protection of employee benefits on transfer and divisions of bus undertakings*—

"—(1) In this section, as it applies in relation to the Passenger Transport Executive or (as the case may be) in relation to the Passenger Transport Authority for any passenger transport area—

"the first transfer" means the transfer under section 58(7) of this Act to the initial company of property, rights and liabilities of the Executive for that area; and

"the second transfer" means the transfer under section 60(11) of this Act to companies formed under that section of property, rights and liabilities of the initial company;

and "the first transfer date" and the "the second transfer date" mean respectively the date on which the first transfer and the date on which the second transfer takes effect.

(2) The Passenger Transport Executive for any passenger transport area shall have power to make, in such manner as they think fit, such provision as appears to them to be appropriate in connection with either the first or the second transfer for the maintenance to any extent of any concession, benefit or privilege of a description enjoyed immediately before the first transfer date by—

(a) persons who then were or had been employed in such part of the Executive's undertaking, or of the undertaking of any wholly-owned subsidiary of the Executive, as was transferred on that date to the initial company; or

(b) members of the families of any such persons.

(3) Subject to subsection (4) below, the Passenger Transport Authority for any passenger transport area shall have power to make, in such manner as they think fit, such provision as appears to them to be appropriate in connection with the second transfer for the maintenance to any extent of any concession, benefit or privilege of a description enjoyed immediately before the second transfer date by—

(a) persons who then were or had been employed in any undertaking or part of an undertaking transferred on that date to a company formed under section 60 of this Act; or

(b) members of the families of any such persons.

(4) Subsection (3) above shall apply to any concession, benefit or privilege of a description to which subsection (2) above applies.

(5) Where provision for the maintenance of a concession, benefit or privilege of any description may be made under subsection (2) or (3) above provision may instead be made, in any cases or classes of case to which that subsection applies, for the making of any payment or the provision of any other concession, benefit or privilege in compensation for he loss or (as the case may be) for any reduction or limitation of concessions, benefits or privileges of that description."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Stott: I beg to move amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 18, leave out from 'as' to 'enjoyed' in line 21 and insert—

'will guarantee, in connection with the first or second transfer, the maintenance of all concessions, benefits, privileges and pensions.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment, in line 30, leave out from 'as' to 'before' in line 33 and insert—

'will guarantee, in connection with the second transfer, the maintenance of all concessions, benefits, privileges, and pensions enjoyed'.

Mr. Stott: It is important to examine exactly what their Lordships have done in amendment No. 121. The

[Mr. Stott]

Government's response by the noble Lord Trefgarne to the amendments moved by Lord Banks appear to be reasonable, but on close examination a number of inadequacies are revealed. We can narrow them down to four. Let us first examine the financial liability. Any service by an employee within a superannuation scheme up to the date of transfer to the company is protected. It leaves aside the question of how the pension increases are to be funded in the absence of any central Government funding. There are two options. The first is for the company. If an employee is transferred to a company, the cost of funding pension increases from previous service could be borne by the company as a transferred liability from the executive. That would affect the company's ability to compete because the cost would be substantial.

The cost could be retained by the executive, but it would then become the first charge on the revenue grant from the authority as that would be the only source of income. That would adversely affect the ability to subsidise services and grant concessionary fares unless the Secretary of State allowed an additional amount above the EFL for that purpose.

Even though the gratuity schemes are covered by the amendments, no reference is made to former employees who retired before their employing authority brought transferred employees within the scope of superannuation. In some instances, these schemes have been unfunded and payments have been made by the executive out of general income. There is protection for any such scheme under local powers, but some have their origins in acquired undertakings.

It is expected that this liability will continue to be borne by the executive, but in some cases there might be no legal obligations to do so. With the pressure on the precept which will be the only source of funding for the executive, there can be no guarantee. The suggestion is that there should be some protection for retired employees in receipt of gratuities.

Earlier, the Secretary of State referred to the employees' option. The Government intend to alter the local government superannuation regulations to allow company employees to be admitted to the scheme. That is the deemed option. The option is given to the company or local authority, not to the employee. If that option is not exercised by the employer, the employee's position could be adversely affected since the new scheme might not be as good as the local government superannuation scheme. Alternatively, the employers might not be prepared to admit the employees to the scheme on grounds of ill health or old age. In such circumstances, it could be impossible for the employee to protect himself by private arrangements. It is therefore important that the employee should have the right to opt.

God forbid that bankruptcy should occur, but one never knows. Bankruptcy is not covered. That might be acceptable in respect of new employees, but it could be grossly unfair to existing employees since it could affect previous service as well as service with a particular company. Employees with local authority sectors in transport undertakings work for organisations which cannot go bankrupt. Thus, they enjoy complete security. They organise their personal affairs accordingly. Their position is altered by the Bill and employees might now be unable to protect themselves adequately in the absence of a Government guarantee in respect of their superannuation rights.

A serious problem is revealed by our discussions on pensions and superannuation, not just for the National Bus Company and its employees but for the thousands of employees of the PTEs and municipal undertakings throughout the country.

I do not wish to press our amendments to a Division, but I hope that the Secretary of State will examine what I have said and perhaps devise a way of incorporating in legislation the spirit of what I have said.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has made a constructive, detailed and complicated speech which I shall try to answer as fully as I can. I shall be happy to supplement my reply with a letter, because some of his remarks were highly technical.

Before replying I shall say something about the Lords amendment which the Government recommend the House to accept. It was introduced by the Government to give power to PTEs and PTAs to provide for the continuance of staff benefits for employees of their bus companies who, as the result of deregulation or restructuring, might otherwise lose staff benefits—principally free or reduced price travel or, as the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said, gratuities.

Alternatively, it provides for compensation to be paid if the benefits are not to be continued. The intention is simple and limited. This proposed power will be complementary to the scheme-making process, allowing the arrangements for fringe benefits to continue so far as is practicable and for the negotiation of adequate replacements in cash or in kind when they are not.

PTE employees are currently all members of the local government superannuation scheme. They will have a benefit accrued in that scheme representing their service up to the time of transfer to the public transport company. I stress, as I said when we debated the last amendment dealing with pensions, that whatever arrangements are made for the future, transferred staff will be entitled to keep their accrued benefit preserved in the local government superannuation scheme, where it is now.

The hon. Member for Wigan asked what would happen if a company went bust. If the employees had accrued benefits with the local government superannuation scheme, they would be preserved in the event of the company going bust, up to the time of transfer. It is impossible to imagine that a local government scheme would go bust. That is a remote possibility only. No statutory provision is needed for that; it already exists in the rules of the scheme. That preserved benefit will be increased in line with prices until the person concerned retires and receives it as a pension. Thereafter, the pension, too, will be increased in line with prices.

It is important that I should make it clear that staff can keep their accrued benefit in their existing pension schemes and that it is covered, in relation to increases in the cost of living, in the way that I described. I again take issue with Bill Morris, who seemed to imply that that was not so. Talking about the strike, he said:

"The strike is not a strike against the Government. It is an argument with the employers. The employers have it in their authority to guarantee our members continued membership of the local government superannuation scheme. We want to make that absolutely clear."

I do not want him to mislead bus men into thinking that in some way they are being taken out of the scheme for accrued rights. That is not the case, as I have said.

The hon. Member for Wigan asked about the cost of this to the local authority. The employees of PTEs and bus undertakings stay the same. Costs can be allocated by local decision to a PTE or a company. We have said that we will look at the GRE if costs shift between different types of authority. In any event, the pensioners are secure. Thus, thought is being given to that as part of ensuring that the local authority financial regime will accommodate what is being done.

As for the future, we shall not impose any pension arrangements on the public transport company. It would be strange if we did, because the whole point of setting up these companies is to ensure that they can be run as independent, free-standing concerns able to respond to local travellers' needs and local commercial circumstances. It is exactly on that sort of local managerial flexibility that the prosperity of the bus industry and its employees must depend.

Thus, we must leave the company free to negotiate pension arrangements with staff, just as it would negotiate any other term or condition of service — just as any other company is free to negotiate with its employees. We must not give the new companies an unfair disadvantage compared with their competitors. That point was made in the earlier pensions debate.

8.45 pm

I am in no doubt that the companies will be thoroughly responsible employers and do their best for their staff. The hon. Gentleman referred to ill health and old age. It is unlikely that any employer would set up a scheme which excluded his own staff. Most modern pension schemes have no health test, so it is good management practice which these companies should, as many companies do, seek to follow.

They will have the option to continue to participate in the local government superannuation scheme as far as transferred employees are concerned. We recognise that, and we shall make it possible by making the necessary changes to the relevant regulations. Thus, the PTE, with the agreement of the company, can arrange for continued membership of the LGSS for transferred employees. In other words, the Government are willing to make options available for local decision by the company and its parent.

The hon. Gentleman then asked why we could not allow individuals the choice of deciding whether or not to stay in the local government superannuation scheme. Individual choice would be inconsistent with the principles of the LGSS, and with most other occupational pension schemes, too. Apart from anything else, the decision has cost implications for the employer, and therefore for the financial success of the company as a whole.

The decision must ultimately be for management, but, as responsible employers, they would want to consult carefully the staff representatives. The hon. Gentleman will realise that in no occupational scheme is it an individual decision; it is a decision taken by the employer after discussions with his staff and maybe the trade unions.

I hope that those remarks are of help to the hon. Member for Wigan. I believe that he will agree that his amendment would not be appropriate. Accordingly, I hope that he will not press it.

Mr. Stephen Ross: I may have the position wrong because I am not an expert on pensions. If, under the local authority, the municipal bus services as they now exist are privatised and the new owner of the privatised bus company wishes to avail himself of the opportunity of remaining within the local government pension scheme, I gather that he can do so. In other words, it is entirely a matter for the proprietor.

However, if it is part of the National Bus Company, that situation will not apply because that company's pension scheme is to be would up and the accrued benefit will go to those employees who at the time of the winding up, are still in the employment of the National Bus Company or one of its subsidiaries. From then on they will be at risk if their new employer does not run a suitable pension scheme. Is that right or wrong?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman was not right in his second point. If a local government bus operation became a company, whether or not it had private capital in it, the company could opt to stay in the LGSS. The accrued rights up to the time of the transfer must stay in the local government scheme and be available.

With the National Bus Company there is no continuing pension fund, unless the trustees decide that they would like to do that. If the trustees were to decide not to take insurance but to continue to run the fund, they would be able to do that and to safeguard the assets which had accrued at the time of transfer. They would have to run it for perhaps another 50 years because people with service would still be drawing pensions from the fund in 50 years' time. That is from where the desire for greater security came.

The privatised subsidiaries or companies from the National Bus Company could decide either to stay with such an arrangement, if it were to come into existence, and leave their pension business with that fund, or to set up their own funds for future service.

Obviously, they cannot decide to set up their own funds for accrued rights, but they can for the future. There is an analogy between both instances: for future service the choice is with the future company; for past service the choice is with the LGSS for local government bus operations and with the National Bus Company pension funds for past service with the NBC. The earlier arguments concerned how best to guarantee and give security to the accrued rights of the National Bus Company fund.

Mr. Stephen Ross: that is a clear explanation, and it is valuable that it will be on record.

Amendment negatived

Lords amendment No. 121 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 122 to 130 agreed to.

Clause 61

FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL COUNCILS WITH RESPECT TO PASSENGER TRANSPORT IN AREAS OTHER THAN PASSENGER TRANSPORT AREAS

Lords amendment: No. 131, in page 61, line 20, leave out from "agreements" to end of line 23 and insert—

"under which any person undertakes to provide a public passenger transport service of any description on terms which include provision for the making of payments to that person by that Executive or council".

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 216, in clause 83, page 83, line 40, leave out "in respect of a local service" and insert—

"under which a local service is to be provided".

No. 221, in clause 85, page 86, line 41, leave out "respect of" and insert "order to secure".

No. 222, in page 87, line 22, leave out "respect of" and insert "order to secure".

No. 223, to leave out clause 87 and insert the following new clause—

Travel concession schemes

"87.—(1) Any local authority, or any two or more local authorities acting jointly, may establish a travel concession scheme for the provision of travel concessions on journeys on public passenger transport services—

(a) between places in the principal area covered by the scheme;

(b) between such places and places outside but in the vicinity of that area; or

(c) between places outside but in the vicinity of that area;

by operators of such services participating in the scheme.

(2) for the purposes of this section, the principal area covered by a scheme under this section is—

(a) the area of the local authority concerned or, where two or more such authorities are concerned, the area comprising the areas of both or all those authorities; or

(b) if an area comprised within the area which would be the principal area under paragraph *(a)* above is specified in the scheme as being the principal area to which the scheme applies, the area so specified.

(4) Any travel concession scheme established under this section shall define—

(a) the travel concessions which are for the time bring to be provided by operators participating in the scheme;

(b) the description of persons eligible in accordance with subsection (8) below to receive travel concessions under any such scheme who are for the time being to qualify for travel concessions provided under the scheme; and

(c) the dates in any year currently adopted as the dates on which operators may be admitted to participate in the scheme under section *(Right of eligible service operators to participate in travel concession schemes)* of this Act (referred to below in this section as the standard admission dates);

and may include particulars of any other arrangements for the time being adopted by the authority or authorities concerned in establishing the scheme with respect to the operation, scope and application of the scheme.

(5) Any such scheme may define the standard admission dates by specifying particular dates, or by referring to dates of any specified description or separated by intervals of any specified length; but those dates, however determined, must not be separated by intervals of a length exceeding such period as may be prescribed.

(6) Arrangements adopted by the authority or authorities concerned in establishing any such scheme with respect to the operation, scope and application of the scheme (including the matters specifically mentioned in paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* of subsection (4) above) may differ for different descriptions of concessions or services to which the scheme applies.

(7) Subject to section 88 of this Act, where an operator participating in any such scheme in respect of any services operated by him provides travel concessions in accordance with the scheme for persons travelling on those services, the authority responsible for administration of the scheme or (as the case may be) the authorities so responsible in such proportions respectively as they may agree among themselves shall reimburse that operator for providing those concessions.

(8) The persons eligible to receive travel concessions under any such scheme are—

(a) men over the age of sixty-five years and women over the age of sixty years;

(b) persons whose age does not exceed sixteen years;

(c) persons whose age exceeds sixteen years but does not exceed eighteen years and who are undergoing full-time education;

(d) blind persons, that is to say, persons so blind as to be unable to perform any work for which sight is essential;

(e) persons suffering from any disability or injury which, in the opinion of the authority or any of the authorities responsible for administration of the scheme, seriously impairs their ability to walk; and

(f) such other classes of persons as the Secretary of State may by order specify.

(9) In this section "local authority"—

(a) means the council of a county or district in England and Wales or a regional or islands council in Scotland; and

(b) includes also, in relation to England and Wales, a metropolitan county passenger transport authority.

(10) Unless the context otherwise requires, references in this section and in the provisions of this Part of this Act relating to schemes under this section to the authority or authorities responsible for administration of a scheme under this section are references—

(a) except in a case to which paragraph *(b)* below applies, to the authority concerned in establishing the scheme or, where two or more authorities are so concerned, to both or all those authorities acting jointly; or

(b) where the authority or one of the authorities concerned in establishing the scheme are a Passenger Transport Authority for a passenger transport area in England and Wales,

to the Passenger Transport Executive for that Authority's area or (as the case may require) to that Executive and the other authority or authorities so concerned acting jointly.

(11) Where a Passenger Transport Authority have established a scheme under this section, whether alone or jointly with any other authority or authorities, they shall notify the Passenger Transport Executive for their area of any proposal to vary the scheme, giving particulars of the proposed variation."

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment No. 223, in subsection (8), leave out paragraphs *(a)* to *(f)* and insert—

(a) any persons in receipt of any form of pension or who are over the age of sixty in the case of women and sixty-five in the case of men.

(b) all persons under the age of eighteen who are no in full time work.

(c) any persons who in the opinion of the authority suffer from any disability which in the opinion of the authority makes that person unable to rely on private forms of transport.

(d) any other persons whose receipt of travel concessions, would in the opinion of the authority, improve the efficiency of the public transport service provided.".

No. 224, to leave out clause 88 and insert the following new clause—

Reimbursement for travel concessions under schemes

"88.—(1) Regulations under this section may make provision with respect to any of the following matters—

(a) the factors to be taken into account by the authority or authorities responsible for administration of a travel concession scheme under section 87 of this Act in determining the aggregate amount that may be made available for the purpose of reimbursing operators participating in the scheme for providing travel concessions during any period;

(b) the determination by the authority or authorities so responsible of the amounts to be paid to individual operators participating in the scheme, or to any class of such operators, by way of reimbursement for providing such concessions;

(c) the manner of making any payments due to operators by way of such reimbursement;

(d) the provisions or description of provisions that are to be or (as the case may be) may or may not be included in arrangements agreed with operators or adopted by the authority or authorities so responsible with respect to participation of operators in the scheme; and

(e) the terms on which and the extent to which the authority or authorities so responsible may employ any person as their agent for the purposes of the administration of the scheme and the descriptions of persons who may be so employed.

(2) Subject to any provision of regulations made by virtue of subsection (1)*(d)* above and to the following provisions of this section, the arrangements with respect to participation of operators in any such scheme shall be such as may from time to time be agreed between the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme and individual operators.

(3) Subject to—

(a) any provision of regulations under subsection (1) above;

(b) any modifications that may by virtue of any provision of regulations made by virtue of paragraph *(d)* of that subsection or in accordance with section *(Right of eligible service operators to participate in travel concession schemes)* of this Act be agreed between the authority or authorities responsible for administration of any such scheme and any individual operator; and

(c) any modifications applied in the case of any individual operator by a direction given under section 90 of this Act;

the arrangements with respect to reimbursement and terms of withdrawal from participation in the scheme applicable to operators of eligible services participating in the scheme shall be such as the authority or authorities responsible for administration may from time to time adopt and must be the same in the case of all such operators.

(4) For the purposes of the provisions of this Part of this Act relating to schemes under section 87 of this Act, a service is an eligible service if it is a service qualifying for fuel duty grant.

(5) The arrangements currently adopted by the authority or authorities responsible for administration of any such scheme with respect to reimbursement of operators of eligible services participating in the scheme are referred to below in this Part of this Act, in relation to that scheme, as the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme.

(6) In relation to operators participating in any such scheme, references in this section to arrangements with respect to reimbursement are references to conditions of entitlement of such operators to, and the method of determination and manner of payment of, reimbursement in respect of travel concessions provided under the scheme."

No. 225, after clause 88, insert the following new clause — *Publicity requirements for schemes and reimbursement arrangements*—

" .—(1) On or before the date on which a scheme under section 87 of this Act comes into operation or, where it comes into operation on different dates with respect to different concessions to be provided under the scheme, on or before the first of those dates—

(a) the authority or authorities concerned in establishing it shall publish particulars of the scheme; and

(b) the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme shall publish particulars of the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme as they are to apply on initial establishment of the scheme;

in such manner, in either case, as the authority or authorities concerned think fit.

(2) Particulars of any subsequent variations shall be published—

(a) in the case of variations of the scheme, by the authority or authorities concerned in establishing the scheme; and

(b) in the case of variations of the arrangements, by the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme.

(3) Following publication under subsection (1)*(a)* or (as the case may be) under subsection (1)*(b)* above of particulars of any scheme or arrangements—

(a) copies of the scheme or (as the case may be) of the arrangements (with any subsequent variations) shall be made available at the principal office of the authority or (as the case may be) of each authority concerned; and

(b) a copy shall be supplied to any person on request (whether at that office or by post) either free of charge or at a charge representing the cost of providing the copy.

(4) Where the authority or any of the authorities concerned in establishing a scheme under section 87 of this Act are a Passenger Transport Authority, they shall notify the Passenger Transport Executive for their area of any proposal to publish particulars of the scheme in advance of its coming into operation, giving the proposed date of publication."

No. 226, to insert the following new clause—*Right of eligible service operators to participate in travel concession schemes*—

" .—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, where any operator or prospective operator of an eligible service which runs or will run between places within the limits covered by any scheme under section 87 of this Act applies to the authority or authorities responsible for administration of that scheme to be admitted to participate in it in respect of that service, the authority or authorities in question shall be obliged to admit that operator to participation in the scheme in respect of that service as from any standard admission date under the scheme not later than the one next following—

(a) the end of such period as may be prescribed beginning with the date of his application; or

(b) the date on which the service begins;

whichever last occurs.

(2) The Secretary of State may, on the application of the authority or authorities responsible for administration of any such scheme, exempt the authority or authorities in question from the obligation under subsection (1) above in relation to any service or description of services; and the Secretary of State may at any time withdraw or vary any exemption granted under this subsection.

(3) An exemption may not be granted under subsection (2) above on the application of a Passenger Transport Executive, or on the joint application of authorities who include such an Executive, unless the application is made with the consent of the Passenger Transport Authority for that Executive's area.

(4) Subject to any regulations under section 88(1)*(d)* of this Act, where it appears to the authority or authorities responsible for administration of any such scheme, in the case of any operator or prospective operator of an eligible service who applies to be admitted to participate in the scheme in respect of that service, that fares currently charged or proposed to be charged by that operator for relevant journeys on that service include a special amenity element, the authority or authorities in question shall not be required by subsection (1) above to admit that operator to participation in the scheme in respect of that service unless that operator agrees to appropriate modifications of the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme.

(5) Subject to any such regulations, where it appears to the authority or authorities responsible for administration of any such scheme, in the case of any operator of an eligible service participating in the scheme, that fares currently charged by that operator for relevant journeys on that service include a special amenity element, the authority or authorities in question may by notice of not less than such period as may be prescribed exclude that operator from participation in the scheme in respect of that service unless before the end of that period that operator agrees to appropriate modifications of the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme.

(6) For the purposes of subsections (4) and (5) above fares for relevant journeys are to be regarded as including a special amenity element if they are significantly high in relation to the general level of fares for comparable journeys in the principal area covered by the scheme (within the meaning of section 87 of this Act).

(7) References in those subsections to appropriate modifications of the reimbursement arrangements there mentioned are references to such modifications of those arrangements as the authority or authorities concerned consider appropriate for providing reimbursement in respect of travel concessions provided for relevant journeys on the service in question by reference to the general level of fares mentioned in subsection (6) above instead of by reference to the actual fares charged (or proposed to be charged) for those journeys.

(8) For the purposes of this section "relevant journeys" are journeys on which travel concessions are to be provided under the scheme in question.

(9) For the purposes of this section and section 89 of this Act, references to a prospective operator of an eligible service are references to a person who has registered a local service under section 6 of this Act but is not yet operating that service."

No. 227, to leave out clause 89 and insert the following new clause—

Compulsory participation in travel concession schemes

"89.—(1) Subject to subsection (8) below, where the arrangements currently adopted by the authority or authorities responsible for administration of a scheme under section 87 of this Act with respect to the terms on which operators of eligible services may withdraw from participation in the scheme require such an operator to give notice before withdrawing from the scheme in respect of any such service, any such operator shall be obliged to provide any travel concessions required by the scheme on journeys on any such service in respect of which he is participating in the scheme until he gives the required notice of withdrawal and the period of notice has expired.

(2) Subject to the following provisions of this section, the authority or authorities responsible for administration of any such scheme may at any time by notice in writing served on any operator or prospective operator of an eligible service (including an operator already participating in the scheme) impose on him an obligation to provide travel concessions in accordance with the scheme on journeys on any such service operated by that operator to which the notice applies.

A notice under this subsection is referred to below in this Part of this Act as a participation notice.

(3) The power under subsection (2) above to serve a participation notice shall not be exercisable in relation to any such scheme until after the date (or whichever last occurs of the respective dates) of first publication under section *(Publicity requirements for schemes and reimbursement arrangements)* of this Act of particulars of the scheme and of the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme as they are to apply on initial establishment of the scheme.

(4) An obligation imposed by a participation notice shall, subject to subsection (8) below and sections 90 and *(Release from compulsory participation)* of this Act, be effective in relation to any service to which the obligation applies as from the appropriate commencement date for that service until the end of such period beginning with that date as may be specified in the participation notice.

(5) Subject to subsection (9) below, for the purposes of subsection (4) above the appropriate commencement date for any service to which an obligation imposed by a participation notice applies is—

(a) the date immediately following the end of such period of notice as may be specified in the participation notice; or

(b) the date when the service begins;

whichever last occurs.

(6) Where it is proposed—

(a) to vary a scheme under section 87 of this Act; or

(b) to vary the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in any such scheme;

the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme may, not less than such period before the variation is to take effect as may be prescribed, by notice served on any operator of any such service who is under an obligation under this section to provide travel concessions in accordance with the scheme, require him to indicate, within such period and in such manner as may be prescribed, whether or not he is willing to continue to participate in the scheme after the variation takes effect.

(7) Any notice under subsection (6) above shall give particulars of the proposed variation.

(8) Where in pursuance of subsection (6) above an operator indicates that he is not willing to continue to participate in the scheme after the variation takes effect, any obligation of that operator under this section to provide travel concessions in accordance with the scheme which was current at the date of the notice under that subsection and would still apart from this subsection be in force on the date when the variation takes effect shall cease on the latter date (without prejudice, however, to the service of a new participation notice).

(9) Where a notice is served on an operator under subsection (6) above the preceding provisions of this section shall apply, on and after the date when the variation in question takes effect, in relation to any obligation of that operator under subsection (2) above to provide travel concessions in accordance with the scheme in question which—

(a) was current at the date of the notice; and

(b) does not cease (by virtue of subsection (8) above or otherwise) before the date when that variation takes effect;

as if the latter date were the appropriate commencement date for the purposes of subsection (4) above for each service to which the obligation applies.

(10) The exercise of the power to serve a participation notice under this section on any person—

(a) by a Passenger Transport Executive; or

(b) by authorities responsible for administration of a scheme under section 87 of this Act who include such an Executive;

shall require the consent of the Passenger Transport Authority for the Executive's area."

No. 228, to leave out clause 90 and insert the following new clause—

Further provisions with respect to participation notices.

"90.—(1) The authority or authorities by whom a participation notice is served on any person shall send to that person, together with the notice, a copy of—

(a) such particulars of the scheme to which the notice relates and of any variations of that scheme; and

(b) such particulars for the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme and of any variations of those arrangements;

as have been published under section *(Publicity requirements for schemes and reimbursement arrangements)* of this Act before the date of the notice.

(2) Subject to the following provisions of this section, a person on whom a participation notice has been served may apply to the Secretary of State for cancellation or variation of that notice on either or both of the following grounds, that is to say—

(a) that there are special reasons why his participation in the scheme in question in respect of the service or any of the services to which the notice applies would be inappropriate; and

(b) that any provision of the scheme or of any such arrangements as are mentioned in subsection (1)*(b)* above are inappropriate for application in relation to operators other than operators voluntarily participating in the scheme.

(3) Subject to subsection (4) below, an application under subsection (2) above may be made by notice in writing given to the Secretary of State before the end of the period of twenty-eight days beginning with the date of the participation notice.

(4) A person may not make such an application unless he has given notice in writing of his intention to do so to the authority or authorities by whom the participation notice was served—

(a) if a period allowed for that purpose is specified in the participation notice, before the end of that period; or

(b) in any other case, at any time before the date of the notice given to the Secretary of State under subsection (3) above.

(5) Where on any such application the Secretary of State finds the ground mentioned in subsection (2)*(a)* above established, he may cancel the participation notice or (as the case may require) vary it by excluding from it any service operated by the applicant in respect of which he considers the applicant's participation in the scheme would be inappropriate.

(6) Where on any such application the Secretary of State finds the ground mentioned in subsection (2)*(b)* above established, he shall cancel the participation notice unless he considers that a direction under subsection (7) below would meet the case.

(7) Where on any such application the Secretary of State does not cancel the participation notice, he may direct that the current arrangements for reimbursement of eligible service operators participating in the scheme shall apply in the case of the applicant or (as the case may require) in the case of any service operated by the applicant to which the participation notice applies with such modifications as may be specified in the direction.

(8) If the Secretary of State cancels a participation notice under subsection (6) above he shall give to the authority or authorities by whom the notice was served a notice in writing indicating in what respects the scheme or (as the case may be) the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in the scheme are inappropriate for application in relation to operators other than operators voluntarily participating in the scheme.

(9) Any obligation under section 89(2) of this Act which has come into effect before the determination of any application under this section with respect to the participation notice by which under obligation was imposed shall—

(a) cease to have effect, if the notice is cancelled; or

(b) have effect, if the notice is varied, subject to a corresponding variation;

on such date as may be specified by the Secretary of State in determining the application."

No. 229, after clause 90, to insert the following new clause—

Release from compulsory participation

" .—(1) The authority or authorities responsible for administration of a scheme under section 87 of this Act may at any time by notice in writing served on any operator who is an obligation under section 89(2) of this Act to provide travel concessions in accordance with the scheme on journeys on any eligible service operated by him release him from that obligation in respect of that service.

(2) Subject to the following provisions of this section, any such operator may at any time by notice in writing apply to the Secretary of State to be released from that obligation in respect of any such service on the ground that the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme have failed to comply with their obligation under section 87(7) of this Act.

(3) An operator may not make such an application unless he has given notice in writing of his intention to do so to the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme not less than twenty-eight days before the date of the application.

(4) A notice under subsection (2) or (3) above shall give particulars of any alleged failures of the authority or authorities in question to comply with their obligation under section 87(7) of which the operator complains.

(5) On any such application the Secretary of State may, if he finds the applicant's ground of complaint established, determine that the applicant's obligation under section 89(2) shall cease on such date as may be specified in the determination."

No 230, to leave out clause 91 and insert the following new clause—*Supplementary provisions*—

"91.—(1) Regulations under this section may make provision as to—

(a) the maximum or (as the case may be) minimum period that may for the purposes of any provision of section 89 or 90 of this Act be specified in a participation notice;

(b) the form and contents of participation notices and other notices required for any purposes of sections (Right of eligible service operators to participate in travel concession schemes) to *(Release from compulsory participation)* of this Act; and

(c) the manner in which any such notice is to be served.

(2) Where the Secretary of State cancels or varies a participation notice under section 90 of this Act after the obligation imposed by that notice has come into effect he may award compensation to the applicant under subsection (4) below if it appears to him that the applicant has suffered—

(a) in a case where the notice is cancelled, any loss attributable to his participation in the scheme in question; or

(b) in a case where the notice is varied by excluding from it any service operated by the applicant, any loss attributable to his participation in that scheme in respect of that service.

(3) Where on determining an application under section *(Release from compulsory participation)* of this Act (the Secretary of State finds that the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme in question have failed to comply with their obligation under section 87(7) of this Act, he may award compensation to the applicant under subsection (4) below if it appears to him that the applicant has suffered any loss attributable to that failure.

(4) In any case to which subsection (2) or (3) above applies the Secretary of State may by notice in writing require the authority responsible for administration of the scheme in question or (as the case may be) the authorities so responsible in such proportion as may be specified in the notice to pay to the applicant such an amount by way of compensation in respect of the loss there mentioned as may be so specified.

(5) The Secretary of State may if he thinks fit appoint a person to determine an application under section 90 or (*Release from compulsory participation*) of this Act on his behalf; and references in those sections and in subsections (2) to (4) above to the Secretary of State shall be read as including references to a person so appointed.

(6) Regulations under this section may prescribe the procedure to be followed in connection with applications under sections 90 and (*Release from compulsory participation*) of this Act and may in particular (but without prejudice to the generality of that) include provision—

(a) as to the conduct of any proceedings held in connection with any such application; and

(b) enabling the Secretary of State to require either the applicant or the authority or authorities responsible for administration of the scheme in question, or both or all of them, to pay such sum as the Secretary of State may determine towards any expenses incurred by him in connection with the determination of the application.

(7) Where a requirement under subsection (4) above is imposed on more than one authority, the liability of the authorities concerned to the applicant—

(a) shall extend to the whole of the amount specified in the notice imposing the requirement; and

(b) shall be both joint and several;

but if any such authority make any payment, in or towards the discharge of that liability, of an amount exceeding the amount representing any proportion specified in the notice as that authority's share, that authority shall be entitled to recover an appropriate contribution (determined by reference to the proportions specified in that notice) from the other authority or authorities concerned.

(8) Any sums paid to the Secretary of State by virtue of subsection (6)(*b*) above shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund."

No. 231, in clause 92, page 95, line 28, at end insert—

"(2) Where an offence under this section committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to have been attributable to any neglect on the part of, any director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate or a person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, he as well as the body corporate shall be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(3) Where the affairs of a body corporate are managed by its members, subsection (2) above shall apply in relation to the acts and defaults of a member in connection with his functions of management as if he were a director of the body corporate.

(4) Proceedings for an offence under this section shall not, in England and Wales, be instituted except by the authority, or any one of the authorities, responsible for administration of the scheme in question or by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions (and any such authority who would not apart from this subsection have power to bring such proceedings shall accordingly have that power).".

No. 236, after clause 93, to insert the following new clause—

Subsidies for travel concessions

" .—(1) A Passenger Transport Executive may not in exercise of their powers under section 10(1)(xiii) of the 1968 Act (power of Passenger Transport Executive to charge for services and waive their charges, etc.) provide travel concessions for persons travelling on any public passenger transport service provided by the Executive other than persons of any description eligible in accordance with section 87(8) of this Act to receive travel concessions under a travel concession scheme established under that section, except where those concessions are provided under any agreement or arrangements under which the whole of the cost of providing those concessions is to be met by a person other than that Executive or the Passenger Transport Authority for that Executive's area.

(2) The approval of the Passenger Transport Authority for a passenger transport area under section 15(2) of the 1968 Act (approval of Passenger Transport Authority required for alterations by Executive in general level of charges and for reduction or waiver of charges by Executive) shall not be required for travel concessions granted by the Passenger Transport Executive for that area for persons travelling on any public passenger transport service provided by the Executive if those concessions are granted—

(a) in accordance with any scheme established under section 87 of this Act by any authority other than the Passenger Transport Authority for that Executive's area or (as the case may be) by authorities who do not include that Passenger Transport Authority; or

(b) where that Executive's area is in England and Wales, in pursuance of arrangements made with that Executive by any local authority within the meaning of the National Assistance Act 1948 in exercise of their powers under section 29 of that Act (welfare arrangements for handicapped persons);

or correspond to travel concession under any scheme established under section 87 of this Act by the Passenger Transport Authority for that Executive's area or (as the case may be) by authorities who include that Passenger Transport Authority."

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, travel concessions granted by the Executive for a passenger transport area on any such service correspond to travel concessions under any such scheme if they are—

(a) of the same value;

(b) available subject to the same terms, limitations or conditions;

(c) available to persons of the same description;

as the travel concessions provided under that scheme."

No. 237, to leave out clause 94 and insert the following new clause—*Travel concessions on services provided by Passenger Transport Executives*—

"Travel concessions apart from schemes

94.—(1) The payments provided for under an agreement providing for service subsidies entered into by an authority repsonsible for expenditure on public passenger transport services may not include payments in respect of the provision of travel concessions except as provided below in this section.

(2) Subject to subsection (3) below, provision may be included in any such agreement for the making of payments by the authority in question to the person providing the service to which the agreement relates in respect of the provision of travel concessions on journeys on that service or any part of it for any description of persons eligible in accordance with section 87(8) of this Act to receive travel concessions under a travel concession scheme under that section.

(3) Subsection (2) above only applies where the concessions in question are not available, or not available to that description of persons, under any such scheme administered by the authority concerned or by that authority acting jointly with any other authority or authorities."

No. 238, to leave out clause 95.

No. 239, after clause 95, to insert the following new clause — *Travel concessions on services provided by local authorities*—

" .—(1) Where the council of any county or district in England and Wales or of any region or islands area in Scotland are operating any public passenger transport service, they shall have power to provide travel concessions for persons travelling on that service of any description eligible in accordance with section 87(8) of this Act to receive travel concessions under a travel concession scheme established under that section.

(2) In respect of travel concessions provided under this section, any such council may, if they think fit, from time to time transfer to the credit of the account of their transport undertaking sums from the general rate fund or, where that council is the council of any region or islands area in Scotland, from the general fund (within the meaning of section 93 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973).

(3) Sums so transferred must not exceed the cost to the council concerned of providing the concessions or so much of that cost as would not apart from subsection (2) above fall to be met out of the fund there mentioned."

No. 251, in clause 98, page 99, line 3, at end insert—

"*(bb)* references to the current reimbursement arrangements for eligible service operators participating in any scheme under section 87 of this Act shall be read in accordance with section 88(5) of this Act;

(bc) references to a participation notice shall be read in accordance with section 89(2) of this Act."

No. 366, in schedule 6, page 146, line 1, at end insert—

(" . In section 10(1)(xiii) of the 1968 Act (power of Passenger Transport Executive to charge for services, etc.), after the word "Act" there shall be inserted the words "and section (*Travel concessions on services provided by Passenger Transport Executives*) of the Transport Act 1985 (travel concessions on services provided by Passenger Transport Executives)".

. In section 15(2)*(b)* of that Act (approval of Passenger Transport Authority required for reduction or waiver of charges by Executive), for the words "138(1) of this Act" there shall be substituted the words "(*Travel concessions on services provided by Passenger Transport Executives*) of the Transport Act 1985 (travel concessions on services provided by Passenger Transport Executives)".".

No. 367, in page 146, line 2, leave out "the 1968" and insert "that".

No. 373, in page 147, line 24, leave out "(7)" and insert "(8)".

No. 374, in page 147, line 27, leave out ("7") and insert "(8)".

No. 416, in page 154, line 12, column 3, leave out "50(8)*(a)*" and insert

"50, subsections (2) and (6) and, in subsection (8)*(a)*, sub-paragraph (i) and"

Mr. Ancram: When the Bill left the House, it contained eight clauses concerned with travel concessions. It now returns to us with 13 clauses, all of which contain amendments and all but three of which were only tabled in their present form in another place. I would like to explain to the House why the Government felt such radical action was necessary.

During the Bill's passage through the House the Government gave a commitment to introduce provisions for operators of local serv to be required to enter a concessionary fare scheme if they were unwilling to do so on a voluntary basis. This power complements the right that operators have to enter any concessionary fare scheme established on a voluntary basis and enjoy its benefits. At short notice, on the Report, the Government tabled new clauses to make the necessary provision for compulsory participation. The principles behind these clauses remain in the amendments that we are now considering, although it has been necessary to refine much of the detail.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not go into all the technical changes that have been made. These have been fully examined in another place. The advent of the compulsory participation provision, which was requested by this House, has required us to recast the form of many of the clauses as they originally appeared in the Bill.

However, more substantively, we recognise that in giving this power to local authorities we have to ensure that it is not used to the detriment of the operator. Following representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), an amendment was introduced to allow compensation to be awarded to an operator who can show that the terms under which he is reimbursed for his compulsory participation are inadequate, either when the initial compulsory participation is imposed or at any time during its course. There is also provision for the Secretary of State to release operators from compulsory participation at any time if the reimbursement is inadequate. There is provision for a time limit to be set on the duration of a single period of compulsory participation so that an authority has to take stock of its arrangements from time to time.

None of these amendments diminish the power of an authority to use its power to invoke compulsory participation—they merely ensure that it is done fairly. Before the amendments on compulsory participation were introduced, it was felt in some quarters that too much of an advantage rested with the operators. With these amendments, I feel that we have now reached an equilibrium between the interests of the operators and authorities.

A number of other amendments have been tabled to clarify the powers of local authorities and to ensure the effective provision of concessions. A concessionary fares scheme may now be limited to only part of an area so that an authority can use its powers to establish schemes for children, for example, selectively to top up whatever is commercially available. The definition of "children" has been more precisely formulated so that authorities have the power to provide concessions for school children at any time up to their 19th birthday.

The amendments meet the concern expressed by some authorities that they may find difficulty in running an effective scheme by providing that within limits they may control the times of entry to and exit from their scheme by operators. Steps have also been taken to meet the concern expressed by operators that the administration of a scheme might be left to one dominant operator in an area to the disadvantage of his competitors. The Secretary of State now has the power to make regulations to cover that.

Provision has been made also for concessions to be provided on the limited number of services that will continue to be operated directly by the PTE or local authorities following the formation of the new public transport companies.

Finally, I draw the attention of the House to two sets of amendments that are now incorporated within clause 87 that should allay fears that were expressed in another place about the adequacy of local authorities' powers to provide concessions. As it left the House, the Bill was designed to reproduce the powers which authorities already had under the Transport Act 1968 in relation to the services to be covered and the provision of concessions for pensioners, the blind, and those suffering from handicaps which severely impair their ability to walk. It also gave authorities the power to provide concessions for children. However, it became clear during debate and in the light of consultation with the authorities that there was a problem over rail services in the non-metropolitan counties.

The powers in the Bill as drafted reflected the situation in which the metropolitan counties had powers to provide concessions on rail services in their areas as a result of their general responsibilities for the support of those services under section 26 of the 1968 Act. However, there were no corresponding powers for authorities in the shire areas. It appears that a number of non-metropolitan authorities and their equivalent in Scotland are already providing support for rail services. Indeed, in some instances local rail services are at least as important to local transport facilities as the bus services that were covered by the powers under the 1968 Act.

It was therefore decided to remove the distinctions between metropolitan and other areas so that all authorities will have the power to provide concessions on all forms of public passenger transport services.

Mr. David Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. The powers of the non-metropolitan authorities will be extended to cover local travel by rail and services such as ferries and social car schemes. I am sure that the House will agree that this is an improvement.

Mr. David Marshall: The Minister has anticipated what I was about to ask him. I rose to seek clarification on concessionary fares on the ferries in Strathclyde.

Mr. Ancram: It was for that reason that I finished the section with which I was dealing before giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he appreciates that there have been areas in Scotland where ferries have been dealt with in the same way previously. The amendment will regularise the position throughout Scotland as well as the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Perhaps the Minister will be rather more explicit. In Coventry there are at least half a dozen routes which do not make a profit although they are well used by holders of concessionary tickets. What will happen, when the Bill is enacted, to ensure the continuance of service on these routes? The Minister has mentioned that operators who might be interested in tendering for such routes are already expressing doubts about their ability to handle the necessary administration of such schemes.

9 pm

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is bringing together two slightly different aspects of the legislation. In the areas where services currently require subsidy, the Bill provides that those routes should be put out to tender, if the local authority so wishes, to ensure that they are run in the most cost-effective way to the level required by the local authority.

On concessionary fares, authorities will be allowed to draw up their schemes, and it is for them to decide in what areas and to what extent such schemes should apply. That matter is now being regulated, especially by the restructuring part of the Bill that has come to us from another place.

I accept that there are some complexities in what I am setting out, but it is important to appreciate that, if we are to have a scheme that works fairly and properly—many of the ideas for the scheme have come from hon. Members on both sides of the House — we cannot produce something as simple as was originally envisaged.

I come now to another group of amendments from another place, which were tabled by Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove, Lord Stallard and Baroness Stedman. I hope that the House will give the Government credit for accepting these amendments. Although they give my right hon. Friend a wide general power to add additional groups to those eligible to receive concessions under clause 87 by order, they reflect the debate in another place about specific problems that have arisen in relation to groups of people who are eligible to receive assistance with travelling expenses under the terms of the National Assistance Act 1948.

Those groups, including people such as the mentally handicapped and the deaf and dumb, are eligible to receive support from social services authorities. However, it has become clear that in some cases—Greater Manchester springs to mind—concessions are being provided not by the social services authority that has the statutory powers, but by the transport authority.

We have reached the conclusion that it would be appropriate to provide a machinery for removing the financial and administrative problems that would result if transport authorities did not have the power to provide concessions for people in those groups. It is in the light of those problems that we accepted the amendments, which I hope will be welcomed by the House.

My right hon. Friend, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, will consider how best the order-making power can be used to extend the coverage of schemes to those in groups covered by the 1948 Act. It is obviously only right that any decision should be taken jointly by both my right hon. Friends, bearing in mind their common responsibilities and the continuing interest that social services authorities inevitably must have in that area. I must, however, emphasise to the House that, in accepting the amendments, the Government have in mind the problems in relation to the 1948 Act.

Although the amendments on concessionary fares are substantial in number, they continue, in a more refined form, the central policy to which this House has already agreed, and extend the coverage of concessionary fares in a manner which I hope the House will support.

I am sorry to have dealt with this matter at some length, but the provisions are new to the House. I hope that I have, at least in outline, explained the way in which the Government see them working.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I wish to speak to the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) to Lords amendment No. 223.

The Minister did not have the benefit of a Scottish education — *[Interruption.]* Well, he did not have a Scottish primary or secondary education. At one stage I thought that he was in danger of getting his three Rs wrong because he spoke of radical action, refining much of the Bill and recasting many of its clauses. Frankly, we take the view that the Government, rather than extending the area of concessionary fares and the principles that underlie the system, have actually narrowed the application.

The Minister referred to Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove. I have just seen a long letter that my hon. Friend wrote to Lord Belstead after the long passage of the Bill in the other place, expressing some misgivings about the way in which the Government sought to restrict some of the concessions which will operate in practice.

I noted what the Minister said about the National Assistance Act of 1948 to which Lord Carmichael also referred in his letter. I am not unmindful of the way in which the legislation applicable to Scotland operated in recent years under the Concessionary Travel for Handicapped Persons (Scotland) Act 1980. When discussing concessionary fares we must bear in mind that one of the largest restraints on the operation of concessionary fare schemes is the way in which the Government continue to cut the amount of aid to local authorities. That will be the biggest constraint on the ability of local authorities to provide and finance adequate concessionary schemes. No matter what is said, and no matter what legislation the Government say is there in a discretionary form, if the resources are not available to local authorities the schemes will become inoperable.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that in recent months when I have gone to

see elderly people, on every occasion the inevitable question is, "What is going to be done about concessionary fares?" That is the fear uppermost in people's minds. It is a justifiable fear because, as my hon. Friend said, at the end of the day it depends on the amount of money available from the Government. It is remarkable that a Government who pay lip service to the elderly and the care of the elderly should, in effect, be putting the concessionary fares scheme in danger.

Mr. Craigen: My hon. Friend did not have the advantage that we had of serving hour after hour on the Transport Bill Standing Committee. Even if he had, he would still be unable to assuage the fears of his elderly constituents, because the Minister did not give the guarantees necessary to eliminate those genuine fears. We had a lot of soft soap from Ministers and, as the hours wore on, even some of the most dim-witted Government Backbenchers—there were one or two—began to realise that the concessionary scheme was not going to do all that the Minister claimed it would do.

The second main area in which we have to be wary about the Government's pronouncements is about the extent to which local authorities will be able to exercise discretion. Even where there is a will, we now have ratecapping, and the Government, by reducing the amount of transport subsidy, will have a second bite at local authorities, because, effectively, the Government can reduce what local authorities are able to do to sustain concessionary schemes.

In Scotland the average fare in the regions and islands works out at half fare and, in some instances, at a third fare. I am afraid that that will be squeezed even more because of the reduction in the transport subsidy forthcoming from central Government and because of the way in which the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office will work the principles of rate capping.

The Minister referred to the arrangements for the blind, and I shall put on my spectacles for a minute. Bodies such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the National League of the Blind and Disabled are worried about the position of the partially sighted passengers as a group. Their numbers are not inconsiderable. In March 1982 there were about 58,000 registered partially sighted people in England. In March 1984 the figure was 3,271 in Scotland and 4,876 in Wales. In December 1983 there were 1,230 registered partially sighted people in Northern Ireland.

Will the Minister make it clear that these people will not be disadvantaged by the radical changes, recastings and refinements in the other place? Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove went into the matter in some detail in his letter to Lord Belstead, but I shall not weary the House with the details. It is understandable that a person who spent a bit of time looking at the Bill during its passage through the other place took pen to paper and wrote three pages to the Minister. I hope that the Minister can assuage some of our genuine fears.

Mr. David Marshall: My hon. Friend is right to voice concerns about the future of concessionary fares. Does he agree that it is a matter of not only the lack of resources but the possible lack of services? Does he agree that many areas which have services used by people who benefit from concessionary fares are likely, because of the Bill's long-term effects, to have drastically reduced services or even no services? What use is a concessionary fare if there are no services to use it on?

Mr. Craigen: I can tell that my hon. Friend was not hauled up the Clyde in a barrel. Obviously, services need to be running before we can benefit from concessionary fares. Our colleagues and I have taken issue with the Government over the rest of their obnoxious legislation. We are well aware that the other clauses will seriously cripple the ability of operators in many parts of the country to run adequate services.

I have been trying to keep within the confines of order, so I have concentrated merely on dealing with concessionary fares. I hope that the House will in due course agree the amendments standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) because they seek not only to broaden the range of groups who should be eligible for concessionary fares but to avoid any confusion from a Government team that was clearly mystified by the whole process during the Bill's passage.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I shall speak in a positive tone, unlike the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) who showed a negative view. I should like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to comment further on the partially sighted to whom the hon. Member for Maryhill rightly alluded. In another place on 24 October the Government accepted an amendment intended to help disabled passengers. I welcome that.

9.15 pm

I want to make a point which may be in danger of being overlooked. Surely our aim is to ensure that the partially sighted are not excluded from the categories for whom concessionary fares may be provided, if local authorities wish. The Government have agreed to include a power for the Secretary of State to specify "other classes of persons" as eligible for concessions in addition to those already listed in the Bill. In other words, we are going further than pensioners, children, full-time students under the age of 18, blind people and those with a seriously impaired ability to walk.

I understand that it is the Government's intention to make an order specifying the other categories who are to be eligible. Lord Belstead, the Minister in another place, referred to the mentally handicapped, the deaf, the dumb and other passengers. He said that the Government would consider how far it would be appropriate for transport authorities to provide concessions for disabled people other than those named in the Bill.

The point should be registered that partially sighted passengers often have the same mobility needs as blind people and should be among those for whom transport authorities may make provision. Partially sighted people may use buses to avoid a hazardous journey by foot involving busy road crossings. A partially sighted person's level of sight may be affected greatly by changing light conditions, such as darkness on a winter morning or shadowy light and dark. Partially sighted people are often found in low income groups and may have difficulty in finding work. Public transport is vital for them.

I am glad that the Government intend to improve the provisions for eligibility for concessionary fares and I am concerned to make sure that the partially sighted are

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

included, numbering as they do a small category compared with the 130,000 registered blind in the United Kingdom. The Government have argued previously that groups outside those listed in the Bill can be covered if social services departments decide to use their powers under the National Assistance Act 1948. Reference has already been made to that. The Government's acceptance of the amendment in the other place is a welcome recognition that problems arise and that the powers of transport authorities should be widened.

Some authorities include wider categories. The Concessionary Travel for Handicapped Persons (Scotland) Act 1980 extends eligibility in Scotland without the legal complications that arise in the rest of Britain. For example, Tayside and Fife regional councils are among those who give concessionary fares to partially sighted passengers. Thus there is a strong case for that group to be included in categories that are specified as eligible under this legislation. If they are not included, they may be left worse off than they are now.

Mr. Allan Rogers: Opposition Members are disturbed because the Bill places more emphasis on giving fair treatment to operators than to those who are willing to use the transport services. That is demonstrated dramatically in the provisions for concessionary fares. Unfortunately, because of the time restriction, we have to rely on the arguments that were put forward previously.

This is a key issue that will affect many people. In Committee the Government refused to accept amendments which would have ensured a future for concessionary travel instead of the patchwork system which may result. The word "may" in the clause does not give sufficient security for the general provision of concessionary travel throughout the country.

It is hypocritical for any Member to suggest that the Conservatives are concerned about elderly or disabled people not being socially mobile unless there is a concessionary fares system, when the whole public transport system will be severely truncated as a result of the Bill. Conservative members have said in Committee and again today that they want to look after these groups of people but they know that the Secretary of State for the Environment will immediately start cutting the money available and that there is no provision in this or any other legislation to ensure that within the general targets laid down for local authorities or in the rate support grant settlements money can be made available specifically to support concessionary fares schemes.

This is a missed opportunity. The Bill should have provided an opportunity for the Government to go forwards rather than backwards and to show that they are caring and compassionate and want to provide a decent concessionary travel scheme throughout the country. The opportunity has been missed because they do not care. They probably never use public transport and do not appreciate the enormous difficulties that old people, disabled people and young people face, especially in rural areas. The Government have been found lacking in this respect and I hope that some Conservative Members will support the amendment.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): In Committee, Conservative Members were anxious to protect and, indeed, to improve the provisions for concessionary fares. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State delivered our hopes in full on Report and he seems, indeed, to have improved on that today.

I seek my right hon. Friend's clarification on one aspect — the protection of the legitimate budgeting of local authorities. Members will recall that in Committee I outlined a mechanism whereby a local authority could establish a fair and reasonable valuation of the concessionary pass and thus know at the beginning of the financial year its total commitment for that year. The administrative mechanism whereby that budget was shared among the operators was not in my view, or in that of local authority treasurers, an insurmountable problem.

I seek an assurance from the Government today that under the new provisions local authorities will still be able to establish a finite budget. If they cannot do so, the fear of an open-ended commitment may force some authorities to move reluctantly from a pass scheme to a token scheme when they do not wish to do so. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can give an assurance that finite budgets and therefore passes will still be possible, I believe that the last remaining fears of local authorities can be set aside

We have heard the customary noises from the Opposition and the main thrust of the argument made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) has been that even if the Bill achieves all these things, any failure to deliver a concessionary fares scheme will be the fault of wicked central Government failing to provide the resources. In fact, as anyone who has been involved in local government knows, it is not central Government who will determine whether the provision will be made. The rather perverse priorities of some authorities will be the key to whether old age pensioners are threatened. Local authorities which have their priorities right will always find the money for a scheme of the kind that has been set out today.

Mr. Parris: It is rich of Opposition Members to spend their weekends storming up and down the country telling elderly people that their concessionary fares scheme will be taken away, and then spend the weekdays reporting to the House that they have encountered much alarm among elderly people about the future of their pension schemes.

The Government have been able to allay two anxieties which existed in Derbyshire. We were worried about our ability to support concessionary fares schemes on the railways as well as the buses and my hon. Friend has confirmed that that will now be possible. Secondly, we were worried about provision for the mentally handicapped. We knew that we could make such provision through the social services but it would be more sensible to make it through the county council's transport department. My hon. Friend the Minister said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be able to arrange for that by order. Those are two small but helpful alterations to the Bill and I welcome them.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friends for the appreciation that they have shown for the amendments which have been made. As I said earlier, I believe that the scheme we are putting forward now is an improvement. It is largely based on the suggestions made by hon. Members during the progress of the Bill. It is significant that in Committee and on Report Opposition Members argued about the details of the concessionary fares

provisions within this legislation. Tonight they cannot do that. Only one Opposition Member spoke to the details of Opposition amendments. They could merely revert to singing the same old tune—that deregulation was not going to work, that there were going to be fewer buses and that local authorities would not be provided with enough money.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Be careful.

Mr. Ancram: We have heard all these words and songs over and over again during the passage of the Bill. I am reassured tonight that the provisions we are putting forward on concessionary fares are right, because Opposition Members were cautious not to criticise the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) who moved an amendment which contained four extra categories of fares but did not mention any of them. That shows the level of confidence the hon. Member has in his amendment, so we need not spend much time dealing with it.

A number of important points have been raised during what has been a useful debate. The first relates to the partially sighted. It was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and by the hon. Member for Maryhill. The partially sighted are included among the group for whom assistance may be provided under the National Assistance Act 1948 and they are affected by the provisions I referred to earlier.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport now has powers under the amendments which have come from another place. Subsection (8)(*f*) of the new clause which is Lords amendment No. 223 allows him by order to specify other classes of person. I should like to tell my hon. Friend the Member for York that my right hon. Friend will wish to consider whether the partially sighted should be covered under a new order made by the order-making power.

It is important to state that in terms of a number of the categories mentioned tonight, that new order-making power is available, and serious consideration would have to be given to individual cases.

Mr. Craigen: Will the Minister guarantee that he will include that category?

Mr. Ancram: The purpose of having that power available is so that when categories are brought to my right hon. Friend's attention, he can consider them. The hon. Member for Maryhill referred to a letter from his noble Friend Lord Carmichael. Lord Carmichael asked us to accept his amendment and we did so. I believe that the points made by Lord Carmichael in that letter have been met by these provisions.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) suggested that the purpose of these amendments was to be fair to operators. I must say openly that we wish to ensure that we are fair to operators and also to authorities. During the debate there has been a tendency to swing from one to the other, but I believe that we now have the equilibrium right; it is for that reason that the provisions are welcomed by my hon. Friends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) mentioned the ability of authorities to operate concessionary fare schemes without having to move to tokens. Depending upon the method of reimbursement that they adopt, authorities can be reasonably clear at the start of the financial year about the cash that they will have to pay over that year. To ensure that operators are properly reimbursed for journeys that they carry out, authorities may need to make adjustments after the end of the financial year. There cannot be precise, finite budgeting on such a matter, but I believe that within these provisions there is sufficient flexibility to allow past schemes to continue.

9.30 pm

Throughout the course of the legislation there has been debate about whether concessionary fare schemes would continue. Hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) have talked tonight of people's fears as to whether concessionary fares would continue. I do not suggest that it was necessarily him, but Opposition Members started to put about the scare story that the Bill meant the end of concessionary fares long before the provisions were discussed in Committee. That has caused a great deal of unnecessary distress and fear. We are debating a concessionary fare scheme which, I believe, will provide for the type of concessionary fares that we wish to see across the country. I hope that my hon. Friends will reject the amendments moved by the Opposition and will approve the amendments from another place.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 132 agreed to.

New Clause

Co-operation between certain councils and London Regional Transport

Lords amendment: No. 133, after clause 61 insert—

" .—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, any non-metropolitan county or district council in England and Wales and London Regional Transport shall each have power to enter into any agreement or arrangements with the other undert which that council or (as the case may be) London Regional Transport underake to contribute towards any expenditure incurred by the other party to the agreement or arrangements in making payments to a person providing a public passenger transport service under any agreement entered into by that other party in exercise of any power that other party may have to secure the provision of that service.

(2) The agreement under which the payments are made must have been entered into in pursuance of the agreement or arrangements between the council in question and London Regional Transport.

(3) The power of London Regional Transport under section 3(2) of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 (contracting-out powers) to enter into and carry out agreements with any person for the provision by that person of any public passenger transport service, if exercised in pursuance of any agreement or arrangements entered into under this section, shall be limited to cases where the service in question would not be provided without subsidy and shall also be subject to sections 83 to 86 of this Act.

(4) Section 28 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 (agreements with respect to the provision by London Regional Transport of extra services and facilities financed by certain other authorities) shall cease to apply in relation to agreements with district councils, and accordingly—

(a) in subsection (1) of that section—

(i) the word "or" shall be inserted at the end of paragraph (*b*); and

(ii) paragraph (*d*) and the word "or" immediately preceding it shall be omitted; and

(b) in subsection (2) of that section—

(i) the word "and" shall be inserted after the word "borough"; and

(ii) the words "and the council of any district" shall be omitted.

[Mr. Ancram]

(5) Subsection (3) above is without prejudice to section 6 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 (obligation of London Regional Transport to invite tenders for carrying on activities in certain circumstances)."

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 215, in clause 82, page 83, line 36, at end insert

and in sections 83 to 86 of this Act include references to London Regional Transport in relation to any exercise of their power under section 3(2) of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 (contracting-out powers) which by virtue of section *(Co-operation between certain councils and London Regional Transport)* (3) of this Act is subject to those sections."

No. 415, in schedule 7, page 154, line 11, column 3, at beginning insert—

"In section 28, in subsection (1) paragraph *(d)* and the word "or" immediately preceding it, and in subsection (2) the words "and the council of any district"."

Mr. Ridley: An important objective of the Bill is to ensure that local authorities co-operate with one another to achieve the most effective use of public funds. That co-operation will be especially important in the case of cross-boundary services, because travel patterns do not always respect adminstrative boundaries. Without these amendments, the Bill would not provide for such an arrangement between London Regional Transport, which is of course not a local authority, and adjoining county and district councils in subsidising services in which they both have an interest. The amendments put that right. They enable LRT to take the lead with a contribution from the council or vice versa. When LRT takes the lead in securing services under such an arrangement, it will be bound by the Bill's tendering provisions for local bus services in the same way as local authorities.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 62

EXCLUSION OF POWERS OF CERTAIN COUNCILS TO RUN BUS UNDERTAKINGS

Lords amendment: No. 134, in page 61, line 32, leave out from "service" to "until" in line 33.

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 135, in page 61, line 35, at end insert—

"Reference below in this Part of this Act to a council operating a bus undertaking are references to any council to whom this subsection applies."

Mr. Ancram: The amendments are solely technical and unless the House wishes me to do so I do not believe that they need be further explained.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 135 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 136, in clause 62, page 62, line 30, leave out "to" and insert

"(according to the context) to—
(i)"

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 137, in clause 62, page 62, line 35, at end insert

(ii) "; or all property of the council used or appropriated for use and all rights and liabilities of the council subsisting for the purposes of any such activities.".

No. 139, in clause 63, page 63, line 15, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

"(3) Subject to subsections (3A) and (3B) below, a council's bus undertaking shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part of this Act as forming part of a joint undertaking if the services for the carriage of passengers by road provided in the course of the activities of the council's bus undertaking are wholly or mainly provided under any agreement for—

(a) the provision or operation of those services by a body acting on the joint behalf of that council and one or more other councils; or

(b) the operation of those services by any company operating those services in conjunction with services for the carriage of passengers by road provided by that company.

(3A) Subsection (3)*(a)* above only applies where the agreement provides for the distribution among the parties on its termination of—

(a) all assets, or the proceeds of all assets, used or appropriated for use for the purpose of providing services for the carriage of passengers by road under the agreement; or

(b) all such assets or proceeds excluding only land or the proceeds of disposal of land.

(3B) Subsection (3)*(b)* above only applies where—

(a) the agreement includes provision for securing that the parties on termination of the agreement hold shares of equal value in assets required to be brought into account on termination of the agreement; and

(b) those assets include all assets so used or appropriated for use."

No. 140, in clause 63, page 63, line 35, leave out "or arrangements".

No. 141, in clause 64, page 64, line 7, leave out "or arrangements as are" and insert "as is".

No. 143, in clause 65, page 65, line 16, leave out from beginning to end of line 17 and insert

"In any case within section 63(3)*(a)* of this Act both or all the councils participating in the joint undertaking may".

No. 145, in clause 65 page 65, leave out "or arrangements".

No. 146, in clause 65, page 66, line 11, leave out from "case" to second "the" in line 13 and insert

"within section 63(3)*(b)* of this Act".

No. 147, in clause 65, page 66, line 14, leave out "that party" and insert

"the company carrying on the joint undertaking".

No. 148, in clause 65, page 66, line 16, at end insert "by the council concerned".

No. 149, in clause 65, page 66, line 24, after first "of" insert—

"(i) all property rights and liabilities of the body carrying on that undertaking; and

(ii) ".

No. 150, in clause 65, page 66, line 43, leave out from "and" to "share" in line 1 on page 67 and insert

" , in any case within section 63(3)*(b)* of this Act, for the transfer to the company carrying on the joint undertaking of any property, rights and liabilities of the council concerned which are comprised in that company's".

No. 151, in clause 65, page 67, line 5, leave out

"any joint body established for the purposes of"

and insert "the body carrying on".

No. 152, in clause 65, page 67, line 20, at beginning insert
"in any case within section 63(3)(*a*) of this Act,".

No. 153, in clause 65, page 67, line 20, leave out "any joint body established for the purposes of" and insert "the body carrying on".

No. 154, in clause 65, page 67, leave out lines 22 to 27.

No. 157, in clause 68, page 70, line 12, leave out "councils to whom section 63(1) of this Act applies" and insert
"such councils as are referred to in subsection (2) above"

No. 188, in clause 71, page 74, line 41, leave out "person" and insert "council".

No. 212, in clause 79, page 82, line 7, leave out "(3) and".

Mr. David Mitchell: The purpose of this group of amendments, voluminous though it is, is to clarify the meaning of "joint undertaking". Some bus undertakings exist under agreements giving rights over assets to more than one council, and would have fallen outside the definition of "joint undertaking" as originally drafted. Transfers by order under clause 65 would not have applied. It would, however, be inappropriate for the property rights and liabilities of those undertakings to be transferred under the scheme which makes provisions that apply to other district councils, since the parties might not be able to reach agreement about the allocation of property and other assets and the order — making procedure would be needed to settle matters. The amendments make it clear that in cases of that sort the undertakings fall within the definition of "joint undertaking", and are therefore subject to the order making process. We have also clarified that public transport companies can be formed as joint companies under the provisions only by two or more councils.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 137 to 141 agreed to.

Clause 65

ORDERS FOR TRANSFER OF JOINT UNDERTAKINGS TO COMPANIES FORMED UNDER SECTION 63

Lords amendment: No. 142, in page 65, line 12, after "undertaking" insert
(whether or not then vested in that council)"

Mr. Mitchell: I beg to move, that this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 144, in page 65, line 21, after "undertaking" insert "and (without prejudice to that) to all property rights and liabilities of the body carrying on that undertaking"

No. 155, in clause 66, page 68, line 22, leave out "and"

No. 156, in page 68, line 28, at end insert
"; and (*e*) with respect to the consideration to be provided by any such person for any transfer under the order."

No. 159, in clause 69, page 70, line 41, at end insert —

The reference above in this subsection to the transfer to a public transport company of its initial undertaking is a reference, in relation to any such company, to the transfer or (if more than one) the first transfer of property, rights and liabilities to that company under section 58(7), 60(10), 64(7) or 66(2) of this Act."

No. 189, in clause 71, page 74, line 3, leave out from "company" to "any" in line 4 and insert
"so formed by way of consideration for"

No. 199, in clause 75, page 76, line 42, leave out from "in" to "requires" in line 1 on page 77 and insert
"pursuance of any provision made by any scheme or order under this Part of this Act in connection with any transfer of property, rights and liabilities to the company in question for which that scheme or order provides"

No. 200, in page 77, line 26, leave out "and" and insert "or"

No. 202, in clause 76, page 78, line 25, leave out "and" and insert "or"

No. 207, in clause 78, page 79, line 17, leave out "or" and insert "and"

No. 210, in clause 79, page 80, line 44 leave out "subsection (6) below" and insert
"the following provisions of this section"

No. 211, in page 81, line 10, at end insert—
"(6A) Any order under this section may make modifications in Schedule 4 for the purposes of its application to a transfer effected by that order."

No. 271, in clause 113, page 111, line 12, leave out "and" "or"

No. 273, in page 111, line 17, at beginning insert "(or partly in one way and partly in the other)"

No. 274, in page 111, line 19, at end insert "(including in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of that, provision with respect to the consideration to be provided by the transferee for any transfer under the scheme)"

No. 275, in page 111, line 20, leave out "subsection (4) below" and insert
"the following provisions of this section"

No. 276, in page 111, line 34, at end insert—
"(5) The Secretary of State may by order make modifications in Schedule 4 for the purposes of its application to transfers under section 50(4), 58(7), 60(10) or 64(7) of this Act."

Mr. Mitchell: This is a group of technical amendments relating to transfer schemes, designed to ensure that they can work properly in all the circumstances that might arise. The amendments also make it clear that the proposals to transfer property, rights or liabilities put forward if a council participates in a joint undertaking may relate to property, rights or liabilities, which at the time the proposal is put forward, are vested in the joint undertaking rather than in the individual authority.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 143 to 191 agreed to.

Clause 72

APPLICATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY FINANCIAL CONTROLS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMPANIES

Lords amendment: No. 192, in page 74, line 33, leave out from beginning to end of line 21 on page 75.

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 193, in page 75, line 22, leave out
"Subject to the following provisions of this section"

No. 195, in page 75, leave out lines 30 to 45 and insert—
"(5) Where a public transport company's controlling authority are a composite authority, the duty imposed by subsection (4) above is a joint duty of both or all of the component councils of that authority."

Mr. Ridley: This is an important amendment. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) in his place, because he pressed very hard for such a scheme.

[Mr. Ridley]

During earlier debates in the House and in another place there was criticism of our proposal that all the capital expenditure incurred by the new public transport companies should count for capital control purposes as though it were incurred by their controlling authorities. The amendments respond to that concern. They remove the companies' own expenditure from the capital control system. There will still be control over the extent of their external finance. The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 ensures that capital spending financed by the controlling authority remains subject to control, and clause 72 still provides that companies can borrow only from the controlling authority except for temporary loans and overdrafts. We are therefore placing control over the amount that the companies can raise by external grants or borrowing while allowing them full freedom to deploy their own resources. That is fully in line with the arguments put forward by Lord Shepherd in the debate in the other place, when he emphasised that capital expenditure should come from internal resources when possible, and that the companies should aim to replace their assets by the amounts that they can generate.

We believe that that is the best way to encourage the new companies to make business-like pricing and investment decisions. I hope that the House will welcome the change. We shall consult the local authority associations and the PTEs on the working of the new system as soon as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 193 to 205, and amendment No. 205(a) agreed to.

Clause 78

COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 206, in page 79, line 10, at end insert "or pension rights"

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 209, in page 80, line 14, after "emoluments" insert "or pension rights"

No. 284, in clause 120, page 117, line 5, at end insert—

""pension rights" includes, in relation to any person, all forms of right to or eligibility for the present or future payment of a pension, and any expectation of the accruer of a pension under any customary practice, and includes a right of allocation in respect of the present or future payment of a pension;"

Mr. Ridley: The amendment simply ensures that the power to make compensation regulations in clause 81 is properly comprehensive. We originally thought that the clause would cover pension rights by virtue of the word "emoluments", but subsequent legal advice is that that is not so. The amendment seeks to put that right.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 207 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 208, in page 80, line 2, after "of" insert

"or, in Scotland, sequestration of the estate of, or granting of a trust deed for creditors by,"

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is a minor technical amendment. It clarifies Scottish legal terminology.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 209 to 218 agreed to.

Clause 85

EXCEPTIONS FROM SECTION 83

Lords amendment: No. 219, in page 86, line 37, leave out "or".

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 220, in page 86, line 39, at end insert

"or

(c) securing the provision of a service to meet any public transport requirement which has arisen unexpectedly and ought in the opinion of the authority to be met without delay;"

Mr. Ridley: The amendments will allow authorities to enter into emergency subsidy agreements to meet any public transport needs that arise unexpectedly. It gives added flexibility for authorities to take prompt action without having to wait for the results of a tendering process. Of course, authorities will, as now, be required to invite tenders as soon as possible afterwards.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 220 to 222 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 223, leave out clause 87 and insert the following new clause—

"Travel concession schemes

.—(1) Any local authority, or any two or more local authorities acting jointly, may establish a travel concession scheme for the provision of travel concessions on journeys on public passenger transport services—

(a) between places in the principal area covered by the scheme;

(b) between such places and places outside but in the vicinity of that area; or

(c) between places outside but in the vicinity of that area;

by operators of such services participating in the scheme.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the principal area covered by a scheme under this section is—

(a) the area of the local authority concerned or, where two or more such authorities are concerned, the area comprising the areas of both or all those authorities; or

(b) if an area comprised within the area which would be the principal area under paragraph *(a)* above is specified in the scheme as being the principal area to which the scheme applies, the area so specified.

(4) Any travel concession scheme established under this section shall define—

(a) the travel concessions which are for the time being to be provided by operators participating in the scheme;

(b) the description of persons eligible in accordance with subsection (8) below to receive travel concessions under any such scheme who are for the time being to qualify for travel concessions provided under scheme; and

(c) the dates in any year currently adopted as the dates on which operators may be admitted to participate in the scheme under section *(Right of eligible service operators to participate in travel concession schemes)* of this Act (referred to below in this section as the standard admission dates);

and may include particulars of any other arrangements for the time being adopted by the authority or authorities concerned in establishing the scheme with respect to the operation, scope and application of the scheme.

(5) Any such scheme may define the standard admission dates by specifying particular dates, or by referring to dates of any

specified description or separated by intervals of any specified length; but those dates, however determined, must not be separated by intervals of a length exceeding such period as may be prescribed.

(6) Arrangements adopted by the authority or authorities concerned in establishing any such scheme with respect to the operation, scope and application of the scheme (including the matters specifically mentioned in paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* of subsection (4) above) may differ for different descriptions of concessions or services to which the scheme applies.

(7) Subject to section 88 of this Act, where an operator participating in any such scheme in respect of any services operated by him provides travel concessions in accordance with the scheme for persons travelling on those services, the authority responsible for administration of the scheme or (as the case may be) the authorities so responsible in such proportions respectively as they may agree among themselves shall reimburse that operator for providing those concessions.

(8) The persons eligible to receive travel concessions under any such scheme are—

(a) men over the age of sixty-five years and women over the age of sixty years;

(b) persons whose age does not exceed sixteen years;

(c) persons whose age exceeds sixteen years but does not exceed eighteen years and who are undergoing full-time education;

(d) blind persons, that is to say, persons so blind as to be unable to perform any work for which sight is essential;

(e) persons suffering from any disability or injury which, in the opinion of the authority or any of the authorities responsible for administration of the scheme, seriously impairs their ability to walk; and

(f) such other classes of persons as the Secretary of State may by order specify.")

(9) In this section "local authority"—

(a) means the council of a county or district in England and Wales or a regional or islands council in Scotland; and

(b) includes also, in relation to England and Wales, a metropolitan county passenger transport authority.

(10) Unless the context otherwise requires, references in this section and in the provisions of this Part of this Act relating to schemes under this section to the authority or authorities responsible for administration of a scheme under this section are references—

(a) except in a case to which paragraph *(b)* below applies, to the authority concerned in establishing the scheme or, where two or more authorities are so concerned, to both or all those authorities acting jointly; or

(b) where the authority or one of the authorities concerned in establishing the scheme are a Passenger Transport Authority for a passenger transport area in England and Wales,

to the Passenger Transport Executive for that Authority's area or (as the case may require) to that Executive and the other authority or authorities so concerned acting jointly.

(11) Where a Passenger Transport Authority have established a scheme under this section, whether alone or jointly with any other authority or authorities, they shall notify the Passenger Transport Executive for their area of any proposal to vary the scheme, giving particulars of the proposed variation.")

Read a Second time.

Amendment *(a)* proposed to Lords amendment No. 223, in line 39, leave out paragraphs *(a)* to *(f)* and insert—

(a) any persons in receipt of any form of pension or who are over the age of sixty in the case of women and sixty-five in the case of men.

(b) all persons under the age of eighteen who are not in full time work.

(c) any persons who in the opinion of the authority suffer from any disability which in the opinion of the authority makes that person unable to rely on private forms of transport.

(d) any other persons whose receipt of travel concessions, would in the opinion of the authority, improve the efficiency of the public transport service provided.'.

—[*Mr. Craigen.*]

Question put, That amendment *(a)* to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 228.

Division No. 307] **[9.45 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*

Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Roger Thomas.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendments Nos. 223 to 241 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 242, after clause 95, insert the following new clause—

GRANTS FOR ESTABLISHMENT, ETC., OF RURAL PASSENGER SERVICES IN WALES AND SCOTLAND

.—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury make in such cases as he thinks fit a grant to any person for the purpose of securing the establishment, continuance or improvement of any public passenger transport service within the opinion of the Secretary of State is or will be for the benefit of persons residing in any rural area in Wales or Scotland.

(2) In the case of any grant under this section for the purpose of securing the continuance of an existing service—

(a) the service must be one which was established with the assistance of a grant under this section; and

(b) the grant must be for securing its continuance during such period from the time when it was first operated as appears to the Secretary of State to be appropriate in the case of that service.

(3) In the case of any grant under this section for the purpose of securing the improvement of an existing service the improvement in view must be one which appears to the Secretary of State to involve an innovative approach to the use of vehicles, equipment or other facilities in providing the service.

(4) Grants under this section shall be of such amount and subject to such conditions (including conditions requiring their repayment in specified circumstances) as the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury, determine, either generally or in relation to any particular cases or classes of case."

Mr. Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 243, after clause 95, insert the following new clause—

Transitional rural bus grants

"(1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury, make in such cases as he thinks fit a grant to any person in respect of qualifying mileage run at any time during the period of four years beginning with the date on which this section comes into force by vehicles used by that person in operating a service which at the time in question is a service eligible for grant under this section.

(2) A service is eligible for grant under this section at any time when—

(a) it is a service qualifying for fuel duty grant;

(b) it is being operated wholly or partly within a rural area in Great Britain (outside London); and

(c) it meets such other requirements as the Secretary of State thinks fit to impose;

and in subsection (1) above "qualifying mileage" means, in relation to any vehicle, mileage run by that vehicle within any such rural area.

(3) Grants under this section shall be of such amount and subject to such conditions (including conditions requiring their repayment in specified circumstances) as the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury, determine, either generally or in relation to any particular cases or classes of case.")

No. 252, in page 99, line 9, leave out from beginning to ("and") in line 10.

No. 253, in page 99, line 13, at end insert—

"(1A) For the purposes of this Part of this Act, a service is a service qualifying for fuel duty grant at any time when fuel used in operating the service falls to be taken into account for the purpose of calculating grant payable to the operator of the service under section 92 of the Finance Act 1965 (grant to operators of bus services towards duty charged on bus fuel)."

No. 287, in clause 121 page 118, line 39, leave out "95" and insert

"(Grants for establishment, etc., of rural passenger services in Wales and Scotland), (Transitional rural bus grants)"

Mr. Mitchell: the new provisions do not mean any fundamental change. They describe in more detail the powers to make the rural grants.

Clause 95, as it stands, apparently gives the Secretary of State very wide powers to make grants, so wide that I am advised that its interpretation could have given rise to serious difficulties in its practical application. The new clauses are designed to replace clause 95 and define with greater precision the two grants that we propose to pay towards rural services.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this amendment involves privilege.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Lords amendment No. 243 also involves privilege.

Lords amendment No. 243 agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I will ensure that the appropriate entry in made in the Journal.

Clause 96

GRANTS TOWARDS DUTY CHARGED ON BUS FUEL

Lords amendment: No. 244, in page 97, line 16, leave out "In section 92" and insert "(1) In section 92(1)"

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No 245, in page 97, line 17, leave out from "fuel" to "In" in line 35 and insert—

(a) the words "any bus service" shall be ommitted; and

(b) there shall be inserted at the end the words—

"a bus service which is of a description specified for the purposes of this section and which meets any conditions which may be specified in relation to that description of service."

(2) For subsection (8) of that section there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(8)"

"No. 246, in page 97, leave out

"wholly or mainly available to the general public and"

No. 247, in page 98, line 7, leave out "the regulations" and insert—

"regulations made by the Secretary of State by statutory instrument.

(8A) Any statutory instrument containing regulations made under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.""

No. 387, in schedule 7, page 150, line 20, at end insert—

"1965 c. 25.	The Finance Act 1965.	In section 92(1), the words "any bus service"

Lords amendments Nos. 245 and 246 involve privilege.

Mr. Mitchell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

These amendments delete the requirement that a bus service should be

"wholly or mainly available to the general public"

in order to qualify for fuel duty rebate. They also make clear that, in specifying descriptions of bus services which qualify for rebate, the Secretary of State may specify conditions in relation to the description.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 245 to 247 agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I will ensure that the appropriate entry is made in the Journal.

Clause 97

UNREGISTERED AND UNRELIABLE LOCAL SERVICES: REDUCTION OF FUEL DUTY GRANT

Lords amendment: No. 248, in page 98, line 10, leave out paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* and insert

"that the operator of a local service has, without reasonable excuse—

(a) failed to operate a local service registered under section 6 of this Act; or

(b) to a significant extent operated a local service in contravention of that section;"

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 249, in page 98, line 19, leave out subsection (3).

No. 250, in page 98, line 27, leave out "the" and insert "any"

Mr. Ancram: These amendments are designed to improve clause 97 so that it operates more fairly, and to bring it into line with clause 25.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 249 to 253 agreed to.

Lords Amendment: No. 245, in page 97, line 17, leave out from ("fuel") to ("In") in line 35 and insert—

"*(a)* the words "any bus service" shall be omitted; and

(b) there shall be inserted at the end the words—

"a bus service which is of a description specified for the purposes of this section and which meets any conditions which may be specified in relation to that description of service.".

(2) For subsection (8) of that section there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(8)").

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: Nos. 267, in page 108, line 34, leave out subsection (10).

No. 279, insert the following new clause—*Functions of Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives supplementary.*

" .—(1) In Part II of the 1968 Act, the references to that Part of that Act or (as the case may be) to that Act mentioned in subsection (2) below shall include references to this Act.

(2) Those references are—

(a) the references to that Part of that Act in section 12(2), (3)*(d)* and *(g)* (borrowing powers of Executive) and in section 15(5) (expenditure by Authority in performing their functions to be defrayed by Executive); and

(b) the reference to that Act in section 12(5)*(b)* (which refers to rights of priority in respect of any liability assumed by or transferred to an Executive in pursuance of that Act)."

Mr. Ancram: The amendment inserts a new clause which I hope will be welcome to the House. It refers specifically to certain borrowing powers available to the PTEs under the Transport Act 1968, to ensure that they are available to executives in pursuance of their functions under this Act. The other two amendments remove the provisions that extended particular provision of the 1968 Act selectively to only some of the PTAs' and PTEs' functions under the Bill. These are unnecessary if Lords amendment No. 254 is agreed to.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I am now required to put the Questions on the remaining Lords amendments.

Lords amendments Nos. 255 to 421 agreed to.—[Some with Special Entry.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at this day's sitting, the Housing Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing Associations Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and the Landlord and Tenant Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Housing Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4

OTHER DESCRIPTIONS OF AUTHORITY

10.2 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, leave out lines 27 to 30 and insert—

'*(e)* "local authority" means a county, district or London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly, and in sections 45(2)*(b)*, 50(2), 51(6), 80(1), 157(1), 171(2), 438, 441, 442, 443, 444(4), 452(2), 453(2), 573(1), paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 2, grounds 7 and 12 in Schedule 3, ground 5 in Schedule 4, paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 5, paragraph 5(1)*(b)* of Schedule 6 and Schedule 17 includes the Inner London Education Authority and a joint authority established by Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985.'.

I hope that it will be for the convenience of the Committee if I speak generally on the amendments not only to the Housing Bill but to the Housing Associations Bill, the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill and the Landlord and Tenant Bill. The amendments are essentially of two kinds—first to take account of the provisions of the Local Government Act 1985 and, secondly, minor drafting corrections and improvemennts.

The Local Governmet Act has altered the law concerning certain local authorities and, if these Bills are to represent the law as it now is, it is necessary for certain amendments to be made. They can be divided into three groups. First are the amendments to remove references to the Greater London council — references to county councils remain to cover shire counties — and to add references to the new bodies established by the Local Government Act — the new Inner London Education Authority, the joint bodies established by part IV and the residuary bodies.

The same drafting scheme is followed as in the Local Government Act. References to ILEA and to the joint bodies are inserted in the housing provisions, but the position of residuary bodies, whose duration is limited, is dealt with in schedule 13 to the Local Government Act, referring to the relevant housing functions. In consequence of the abolition of the strategic functions of the GLC, a certain amount of re-arrangement of the Housing Bill is required, principally the removal of schedule 1 and the incorporation of the surviving provisions elsewhere.

The number of amendments to the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill is accounted for by the fact that the abolition of the GLC makes it possible greatly to simplify the definition of "local housing authority" in outlying enactments.

The second group of amendments arising as a result of the Local Government Act are those that put back the commencement of the consolidation to 1 April 1986, when the Local Government Act comes into force. A paragraph is also to be inserted into schedule 3 to the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill to make it clear that what is consolidated is the law as it stands after the Local Government Act has come into force, although the Acts

all come into force on the same day. It also makes it clear that references in the consolidation to things done by or in relation to the local authorities before 1 April 1986 continue to include things done by, or in relation to, councils abolished on that date.

The third group is of consequential amendments of housing provisions in various GLC Acts, which also apply to London borough councils. These amendments were not included earlier because of the pending Local Government Bill, but in the event they are purely consequential on the consolidation and are not affected by the Local Government Act.

The minor drafting corrections and improvements are largely to secure consistency of style and expression, to correct minor mistakes which have come to light and to deal with other small points, such as removing references to the Development Land Tax Act 1976 which has been repealed by the Finance Act.

On Second Reading on 21 October 1985 the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) drew attention to the work of the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills, the value of which is recognised by the House. This Committee considers consolidation Bills after they have received their Second Reading in the other place. It then reports to both Houses. Any amendments suggested by the joint Committee are incorporated into the Bill in the other place before it comes to this House.

However, sometimes it is the case that while a Bill is in progress, other Acts change the law, or small drafting or technical matters come to light. In these cases the usual procedure is for the draftsman to submit amendments to the chairman of the Joint Committee as a matter of courtesy and to enable him to comment, should he wish to do so. While there may be no formal requirement, the practice is well established and enables both Houses to deal with such amendments with greater confidence.

In this case the draftsman followed the established practice and submitted all, bar one, of the amendments made to take account of the provisions of the Local Government Act and some of the drafting corrections and improvements. The chairman raised some small points, which the draftsman incorporated. However, due to the absence of the chairman, Lord Brightman, following illness, it was not possible to submit to him before the Committee stage, originally fixed for 24 October 1985, the rest of the amendments, nor those already submitted and commented upon.

The concern expressed about the House considering the amendments in these circumstances led to the agreement through the usual channels for the Committee stage to be put off until today. I entirely understand and accept the grounds for the concern of the hon. Member for Newcastle on Tyne, East. At a late hour I inadvertently expressed myself in a slightly unfortunate way about the problem of getting information to him about amendments. I entirely understand the view that he took about that, and I regret what I said on that occasion.

This has enabled the amendments, as tabled, to be submitted to the chairman over the weekend. I understand that he has seen them and that he is content. In those circumstances and, since they do not change the existing law and represent pure consolidation, I hope that the Committee can move on to consider them in the spirit of co-operation usual for consolidation measures. Before doing so, once again may I pay tribute to the work of the joint committee and to its chairman. It is apparent from what I have said that the committee plays a crucial part in these matters. I am sure that the House of Commons will wish to join me in expressing our gratitude. I commend the amendments to this Committee.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I fully accept the Solicitor-General's apology for the misunderstanding which occurred last week over the timing of the Opposition's receipt of the amendments. The House has rights. It is only proper that the Opposition and the Committee as a whole should be assured that we are agreeing to consolidation. I am now satisfied that we are agreeing to consolidation—indeed, very good consolidation. I endorse the thanks of the Solicitor-General to the Committee and its staff.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5 and 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7 disagreed to.

Clause 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9 disagreed to.

Clauses 10 to 16 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 17

ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR HOUSING PURPOSES

Amendments made:

No. 4, in page 7, line 2, after '14', insert

'and *(Additional powers of authorities in London)* (1)'.

No. 5, in page 7, line 18, after 'authorised', insert 'to acquire land compulsorily'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 17, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 18 to 43 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 44

AVOIDANCE OF CERTAIN DISPOSALS OF HOUSES WITHOUT CONSENT

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 19, line 28, leave out 'given by section 9' and insert

'applicable by virtue of the definition of "housing accommodation" in section 56'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 44, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 45

DISPOSALS IN RELATION TO WHICH TO SS. 46 TO 51 APPLY

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 20, line 12, at end insert—

'(3) The following provisions—

section 170 (power of Secretary of State to give assistance in connection with legal proceedings), and

section 181 (jurisdiction of county court),

apply to proceedings and questions arising under this section and sections 46 to 51 as they apply to proceedings and questions arising under Part V (the right to buy).'—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 45, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 46 and 47 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 48

INFORMATION AS TO RELEVANT COSTS

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 22, line 8, leave out 'dwelling-house' and insert 'house'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 48, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 49 to 55 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 56

MINOR DEFINITIONS

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 25, line 6, at end insert—

'"housing accommodation" includes flats, lodging-houses and hostels, and "house" shall be similarly construed;'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 56, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 57

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART II

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 25, leave out lines 33 and 34 and insert—

'house	section 56
housing accommodation	section 56'.

No. 11, in page 25, line 37, at end insert—

'lease	section 621'.

No. 12, in page 26, line 3, at end insert

'(and see section 452(3))'.

No. 13, in page 26, line 10, at end insert—

'tenancy and tenant	section 621'.

—[The Solicitor-General.]

Clause 57, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 58 to 69 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 70

PROTECTION OF PROPERTY OF HOMELESS PERSONS AND PERSONS THREATENED WITH HOMELESSNESS

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 34, line 29, at end insert—

'(8) References in this section to personal property of the applicant include personal property of any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 70, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 71 to 79 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 80

THE LANDLORD CONDITION

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 39, leave out lines 15 and 16 and insert 'a local authority'.— *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 80, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 81 to 153 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 154

REGISTRATION OF TITLE

Amendment made: No. 16, in page 81, line 2, leave out 'granted for a term of which not more than 21 years are unexpired'

and insert

'a lease for a term of which not more than 21 years are unexpired or, as the case may be, a lease granted for a term not exceeding 21 years'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 154, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 155 to 172 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 173

EXCLUSION OF SHARED OWNERSHIP LEASES GRANTED UNDER THIS PART

Amendment made: No. 17, in page 93, line 41, leave out 'the 1967 Act' and insert

'the Leasehold Reform Act 1967'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 173, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 174 to 187 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 188

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART V

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 101, line 37, column 2, at end insert '(and see section 452(3))'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 188, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 189 to 207 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 208

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART VI

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 109, line 42, leave out 'cost' and insert 'expense'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 208, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 209 to 262 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 263

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART VIII

Amendments made: No. 20, in page 144, line 34, after 'dwelling', insert

'(in provisions relating to housing action areas)'.

No. 21, in page 144, line 40, after 'lease', insert ', lessee and lessor'.

No. 22, in page 144, at end insert—

'tenancy and tenant	section 621'.

—[The Solicitor-General.]

Clause 263, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 263 to 293 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 294

EXTINGUISHMENT OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OVER LAND ACQUIRED

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 160, line 19, leave out from 'prescribed' to 'before' in line 20 and insert 'and if objection to the order is made to the Secretary of State' —*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 294, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 295 to 322 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 323

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART IX

Amendments made: No. 24, in page 176, line 5, at beginning insert 'lease,'.

No. 25, in page 176, line 12, at end insert—

'prescribed	section 614
reasonable expense	section 321'.

—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 323, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 324 to 335 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 336

POWER TO REQUIRE PRODUCTION OF RENT BOOK

Amendment made: No. 26, in page 182, line 4, leave out 'house' and insert 'dwelling'. *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 336, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 337

POWER OF ENTRY TO DETERMINE PERMITTED NUMBER OF PERSONS

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 182, line 17, leave out 'house' and insert 'dwelling'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 337, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 338 to 341 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 342

MEANING OF SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION"

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 183, line 35, leave out 'house' and insert 'dwelling'.

No. 29, in page 183, line 36, leave out 'house' and insert 'dwelling'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 342, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 343 to 352 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 353

APPEAL AGAINST NOTICE UNDER S. 352

Amendment made: No. 30, in page 191, line 17, leave out '*(b)*' and insert '*(c)*'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 353, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 354 to 357 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 358

SERVICE OF OVERCROWDING NOTICE

Amendments made: No. 31, in page 194, line 21, leave out 'house' and insert 'premises'.

No. 32, in page 194, line 30, leave out '1' and insert '4'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 358, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 359 to 399 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 400

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART XI

Amendment made: No. 33, in page 219, line 33, at end insert—

['tenant	section 621'.]—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 400, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 401 to 433 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 434

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART XIII

Amendment made: No. 34, in page 234, line 30, at end insert—

'housing authority'	section 4*(a)*'.

—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 434, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 435 to 458 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 459

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART XIV

Amendments made: No. 35, in page 249, line 2, at end insert—

'first time purchaser	section 449(2)*(d)*'.

No. 36, in page 249, line 16, at end insert—

'recognised body	section 441(1)
recognised lending institution	section 447
recognised savings institution	section 448'

—*[The Solicitor-General].*

Clause 459, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 460 to 462 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 463

PRELIMINARY CONDITION: THE INTEREST OF THE APPLICANT IN THE PROPERTY

Amendment made: No. 37, in page 251, line 16, after 'until', insert 'they are satisfied that'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 463, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 464 to 525 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 526

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART XV

Amendments made: No. 38, in page 284, line 34, at end insert—

'general improvement area	section 253'.

No. 39, in page 284, line 36, at end insert—

'housing action area	section 239'.

No. 40, in page 295, line 10, at end insert—

'tenancy and tenant	section 621'.

—[The Solicitor-General.]

Clause 526, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 527 to 530 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

* Clause 531

CONDITIONS OF ELIGIBILITY: DISPOSAL BY PUBLIC SECTOR AUTHORITY, &C

Amendment made: No. 41, in page 287, line 23, leave out '527(1)(c)' and insert '527*(d)*'. *— [The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 531, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 532 to 602 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 603

INDEX OF DEFINED EXPRESSIONS: PART XVII

Amendment made: No. 42, in page 330, line 35, at end insert—

'closing order	section 267(1)
demolition order (generally)	section 267(1)
(in Schedules 24 and 25)	section 588(2)'.

—[The Solicitor-General]

Clause 603, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 604 to 613 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 614

POWER TO PRESCRIBE FORMS &C

Amendment made: No. 43, in page 335, line 24, leave out from 'prescribed' to end of line 25 and insert 'or'.

No. 44, in page 335, line 31, at end insert—

'(3) The power conferred by this section is not exercisable where specific provision for prescribing a thing, or the form of a document, is made elsewhere.'*—[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 614, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 615 to 618 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 619

THE INNER AND MIDDLE TEMPLES

Amendment made: No. 45, in page 337, line 37, leave out

'section 82 of the London Government Act 1963'

and insert

'section 94 of the Local Government Act 1985'. *— [The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 619, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 620 and 621 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 622

MINOR DEFINITIONS: GENERAL

Amendment made: No. 46, in page 339, line 5, leave out

'the Greater London Council or'.*—[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 622, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 623 and 624 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 625

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 47, in page 340, line 46, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.*—[The Solicitor-General]*

Clause 625, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 1

ADDITIONAL POWERS OF AUTHORITIES IN LONDON

' —(1) A London borough council may provide and maintain, in connection with housing accommodation provided by them under Part II buildings or parts of buildings adapted for use for any commercial purpose.

(2) A local housing authority in Greater London may make arrangements for the rehousing of any person by another such authority; and the arrangements may include provision for the payment of contributions by the former authority to the latter.

(3) The council of an Inner London borough and the Common Council of the City of London may, for the purpose of facilitating the erection of houses in their district, suspend, alter or relax the provisions of any enactment or byelaw relating to the formation or laying out of new streets or the construction of sewers or of buildings intended for human habitation.

(4) The powers conferred by subsections (1) and (3) are exercisable only with the consent of the Secretary of State.'. *— [The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

EXERCISE OF POWERS OUTSIDE GREATER LONDON

' —(1) A local housing authority in Greater London shall not exercise any powers under Part II outside Greater London unless it appears to the Secretary of State, on an application by the authority, expedient that the needs of the authority's district with respect to the provision of housing accommodation should be satisfied by the provision of such accommodation outside Greater London, and he consents to the exercise of the power.

(2) The power conferred by section (*Additional powers of authorities in London*) (1) (provision of commercial buildings) shall not be exercised outside Greater London except with the consent of the council of the district concerned.'. *— [The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 1 disagreed to.

Schedules 2 to 10 agreed to.

SCHEDULE 11

RECOVERY OF EXPENSES INCURRED BY LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Amendment made: No. 49, in page 379, line 36, leave out 'notice or' and insert

'demand or copy, or of the'.*—[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 11, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 12 to 14 agreed to.

SCHEDULE 15

THE KEEPING OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Amendments made: No. 50, in page 406, line 43, leave 'paragraph 12 of Schedule 1' and insert

'section 23(3) of the London Government Act 1963 (orders transferring land held by London borough council or Common Council of City of London)'.

No. 51, in page 407, line 9, leave out 'paragraph 12 of Schedule 1' and insert

'section 23(3) of the London Government Act 1963' —[The Solicitor-General.]

SCHEDULE 16

SUPERSEDED CONTRIBUTIONS, GRANTS, SUBSIDIES, &C.

Amendments made: No. 52, in page 408, line 20 leave out from 'with' to end of line 21 and insert

'the following provisions of this paragraph'

No. 53, in page 408, line 30, at end insert—

"(2A) The limit referred to in sub-paragraph (1)(*b*) is in the case of a condition imposed before 8th December 1965—

(*a*) if the tenancy is a regulated tenancy (other than a converted tenancy within the meaning of Schedule 17 to the Rent Act 1977), the rent which would be recoverable if the tenancy had been converted from being a controlled tenancy on the commencement of section 64 of the Housing Act 1980 and accordingly as if it were a converted tenancy;

(*b*) if the tenancy is a converted tenancy, or a housing association tenancy within the meaning of Part VI of the Rent Act 1977, the rent recoverable under that Act;

(*c*) if the tenancy is a protected occupancy or statutory tenancy within the meaning of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976, the rent recoverable in accordance with that Act;

(*d*) in any other case, such rent as may from time to time be, or have been, agreed between the landlord and the local housing authority or as may, in default of agreement, be or have been determined by the Secretary of State.

(2B) The limit referred to in sub-paragraph (1)(*b*) is in the case of a condition imposed on or after 8th December 1965 such rent as the local housing authority may from time to time determine as being in their opinion the rent which would have been appropriate for them to charge if the house had been provided by them." —*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 16, as amended, agreed to.

SCHEDULE 17

LOCAL AUTHORITY MORTGAGE INTEREST RATES

Amendment made, No. 54, in page 413, leave out line 34 and insert—

"(*b*) for other sums left outstanding, the county fund in the case of a county council and the general rate fund or general fund in any other case" —*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 17, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 18 to 20 agreed to.

SCHEDULE 21

ASSISTANCE BY WAY OF REPURCHASE

Amendment made: No. 55, in page 424, line 5, after 'part', insert 'of this Act'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 21, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 22 to 25 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Housing Associations Bill

10.15 pm

Considered in Committee.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair.*]

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10

DISPOSITIONS EXCEPTED FROM S. 9

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 6, line 28, leave out second '2' and insert '3'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 10, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 11 to 14 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 15

PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS, ETC.

Amendment made: No. 2, in page 9, line 3, leave out 'co-operative' and insert 'fully mutual'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 15, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 16 and 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 18

EXERCISE OF POWERS UNDER SS. 16 AND 17 IN RELATION TO REGISTERED CHARITIES

Amendment made: No. 3, in page 11, line 2, after 'of', insert 'committee member or'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 18, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 19 to 44 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 45

PROJECTS QUALIFYING FOR GRANT: DISPOSAL TO TENANT OF CHARITABLE HOUSING ASSOCIATION, ETC.

Amendment made: No. 4, in page 23, line 32, leave out '6' and insert '5'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 45, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 46 to 51 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 52

CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH GRANT MAY BE REDUCED, SUSPENDED OR RECLAIMED

Amendment made: No. 5, in page 28, line 1, leave out '9' and insert '8'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 52, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 53 to 80 ordered to stand part of the Bill

Clause 81

FURTHER ADVANCES IN CASE OF DISPOSAL ON SHARED OWNERSHIP LEASE

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 44, line 14, leave '9' and insert '8'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 81, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 82 to 100 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 101

MINOR DEFINITIONS

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 55, line 5, after 'a' insert 'building'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 101, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 102 and 103 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 104

LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITIES

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 56, line 6, leave out from '1985' to 'and' in line 8. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 104, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 105 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 106

MINOR DEFINITIONS—GENERAL

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 57, leave out lines 27 and 28 and insert

'sections 84(5) and 85(4) includes the Inner London Education authority and a joint authority established by part IV of the Local Government Act 1985'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 106, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 107

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 59, line 8, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 107, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1

GRANT-AIDED LAND

Amendments made: No. 11, in page 61, line 15, at end insert—

'section 119 of the Housing Act 1957,
Section 152 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966.'.

No. 12, in page 61, line 20, at end insert—

'section 47 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1958,
section 78 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1950,
Section 24 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1968.'.

No. 13, in page 61, line 26, after '1961', insert—

'section 11 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1962.'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2

FURTHER PROVISIONS AS TO CERTAIN DISPOSALS OF HOUSES

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 62, line 4, leave out 'first disposal' and insert

'conveyance, grant or assignment'.

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 3 and 4 agreed to.

Schedule 5

HOUSING ASSOCIATION FINANCE: SUPERSEDED SUBSIDIES, CONTRIBUTIONS AND GRANTS

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 72, line 3, leave out from 'to' to end of line 4 and insert

'the financial year 1986-87 and subsequent financial years'

No. 16, in page 75, line 3, leave out from 'to' to end of line 4 and insert

'the financial year 1986-87 and subsequent financial years' — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 5, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 6 and 7 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair.*]

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

REPEALS

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 2, line 26, leave out '16, 19 or 20' and insert '15, 18 or 19'. — [*The Solicitor-General.*]

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 4 and 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 3, line 3, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April.'

No. 3, in page 3, line 8, after '13', insert '14A'.

No. 4, in page 3, line 9, leave out 'and 51 to 57' and insert

'49A, 51 to 57 and 58A'.

No. 5, in page 3, line 9, at end insert 'and 58B'.

No. 6, in page 3, line 15, leave out '25 to 30' and insert '25 to 29, 31'.

No. 7, in page 3, line 21, leave out '30'. — [*The Solicitor-General*].

Clause 6, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 4, line 47, column 3, leave out 'Sections 21 to 23' and insert 'Section 21'.

No. 9, in page 7, leave out lines 18 and 19.

No. 10, in page 7, line 28, column 3, leave out '118(1) and insert '118'.

No. 11, in page 7, line 28, column 3, at end insert 'Section 145.'.

No. 12, in page 8, line 9, column 3, leave out 'in'.

No. 13, in page 10, line 5, at end insert—

'1985 c. 51.	Local Government Act 1985.	In Schedule 8, paragraphs 12(1) and (3) to (5) and 14(3). In Schedule 13, in paragraph 21, the words "and section 80(1)*(c)* of the Housing Act 1980". In Schedule 14, paragraphs 58*(a)* to *(d)* and *(f)* to *(h)*, 64 and 65.'.

No. 14, in page 10, line 39, at end insert—

'1975 c.45.	Finance (No. 2) Act 1975.	In section 69(3)*(e)*, the words "housing society". In Section 71(3), the words from "'housing society'" to "1964".'.

No. 15, in page 12, line 18, at beginning insert—

'1975 c.45.	Finance (No. 2) Act 1975.	In Section 69(3)*(e)*, the words "housing society". In section 71(3), the words from " 'housing society'" to "1964".'.

—[*The Solicitor-General*].

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 2

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 16, in page 12, line 41, leave out 'the Greater London Council'.

No. 17, in page 13, leave out lines 25 to 29 and insert—

'*(a)* in paragraph 2(1)*(a)*(i) (standard of alternative accommodation) for "the local authority for the purposes of Part V of the Housing Act 1936" substitute "the local housing authority within the meaning of the Housing Act 1985" and after "or, as the case may be" insert "the local authority";'.

No. 18, in page 13, line 33, leave out 'under Part II of ' and insert 'within the meaning of'.

No. 19, in page 13, line 44, leave out '25' and insert '24'.

No. 20, in page 14, leave out lines 46 to 48.

No. 21, in page 15, line 40, leave out '24 and 25' and insert '23 and 24'.

No. 22, in page 16, line 16, leave out '24' and insert '23'.

No. 23, in page 16, line 20, leave out '24' and insert '23'.

No. 24, in page 16, line 21, leave out '23' and insert '22'.

No. 25, in page 16, line 25, leave out '24' and insert '23'

No. 26, in page 16, line 29, leave out '25' and insert '24'.

No. 27, in page 16, line 37, leave out 'deposits' and insert 'loans to or deposits'.

No. 28, in page 18, line 42, leave out paragrah 8.

No. 29, in page 20, line 21, at end insert—

'*Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1967 (c.xx)*

14A. In section 15 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1967 (application of provisions of Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 to acquisition by agreement of land for certain housing purposes), in subsection (1) for "Part V of the Act of 1957", in both places where it occurs, and for "the said Part V", substitute "Part II of the Housing Act 1985".'.

No. 30, in page 22, line 5, leave out '10' and insert '8'.

No. 31, in page 24, line 19, leave out '25' and insert '24'.

No. 32, in page 24, leave out lines 33 to 48 and insert—

'"(7) Subject to subsection (8) below, the 'relevant authority' for the purposes of this section is the local housing authority within the meaning of the Housing Act 1985.".'.

No. 33, in page 25, line 42, leave out '25' and insert '24'.

No. 34, in page 26, line 44, at end insert—

'*Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1975 (c.xxx)*

29A. — (1) Section 7 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1975 (byelaws as to parking, &c. on housing estates) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1) (extension of power to make byelaws)—

(a) for "subsection (1) of section 112 of the Housing Act 1957" substitute "section 23(1) of the Housing Act 1985", and

(b) for "Part V" substitute "Part II".

(3) In subsection (2) (extension of ancillary provisions) for "the said section 112" substitute "section 23(1) of the Housing Act 1985".'.

No. 35, in page 27, leave out lines 1 to 28.

No. 36, in page 28, line 6, leave out from 'of' to end of line 13 and insert 'the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 37, in page 28, line 37, leave out from first 'of' to end of line 40 and insert 'the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 38, in page 29, line 12, leave out from first 'of' to end of line 13 and insert 'the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 39, in page 29, line 33, at end insert—

'*(c)* for the words from "(which impose" to "houses)" substitute "which imposes a rent limit in respect of the dwelling-house".'.

No. 40, in page 30, line 3, leave out 'Part' and insert 'Act'.

No. 41, in page 30, line 5, leave out from 'for' to end of line and insert

'"local authority under section 82(1) of the Housing Act 1974" substitute "local housing authority under'.

No. 42, in page 30, leave out lines 7 to 20.

No. 43, in page 30, line 27, leave out from beginning to end of line 37 and insert—

'*(a)* for "housing authority" wherever occurring substitute "local housing authority";

(b) in paragraph 6 (overcrowding) for "the Housing Act 1957" substitute "Part X of the Housing Act 1985";

(c) for paragraph 8 (meaning of "housing authority" and "district") substitute—

"8. In this Part 'local housing authority' and 'district' in relation to such an authority have the same meaning as in the Housing Act 1985.".'.

No. 44, in page 31, line 1, leave out from 'the' to end of line 8 and insert

'same meaning as in the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 45, in page 32, line 34, leave out from first 'of' to 'towards' in line 35 and insert 'the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 46, in page 33, line 4, leave out 'section 1 of'.

No. 47, in page 34, line 18, leave out from 'of' to end of line 19 and insert 'the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 48, in page 36, line 19, leave out from 'of' to end of line 20 and insert 'the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 49, in page 36, line 31, leave out '15' and insert '14'.

No. 50, in page 36, line 37, at end insert—

'*Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1981 (c.xvii)*

49A.—(1) Part IV of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1981 (control of overcrowding in certain hostels) is amended as follows.

(2) In section 9(1) (overcrowding notices), in the proviso (cases where similar restrictions are in force), for the words from "applied" to the end substitute "for the time being applied to the premises by a registration scheme under section 346 of the Housing Act 1985, a direction under section 354 of that Act, or an overcrowding notice under section 358 of that Act".

(3) In section 12(1) (penalties), in the proviso (exclusion where a person previously convicted under other similar provisions), for the words from "section 90(13)" to the end substitute "section 355(2) or 358(4) of the Housing Act 1985".

(4) In section 16 (premises exempted from controls)—

(a) in paragraph *(e)* (registered common lodging houses), for "section 238 of the Act of 1936" substitute "Part XII of the Housing Act 1985";

(b) in paragraph *(l)* (premises run by registered housing associations), for "Part II of the Housing Act 1974" substitute "the Housing Associations Act 1985".'.

No. 51, in page 38, line 7, leave out 'or the Greater London Council'.

No. 52, in page 38, line 8, leave out 'authority or Council's' and insert 'authority's'.

No. 53, in page 38, line 14, leave out 'or Council'.

No. 54, in page 38, line 19, leave out paragraph 53.

No. 55, in page 38, line 44, at end insert—

'*Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1982 (c.i)*

54A. In section 4 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1982 (removal of vehicles illegally parked on housing estates)—

(a) in subsection (1) for the words from subsection (1)" to "Housing Act 1957" substitute "section 23(1) of the Housing Act 1985 (byelaws for regulation of authority's houses)";

(b) in the same subsection for "Part V of the said Act of

1957" substitute "Part II of the Housing Act 1985";

(c) in subsection (2) for "the said section 112" substitute "section 23(1) of the Housing Act 1985".'.

No. 56, in page 40, line 12, at end insert—

'Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1984 (c. xxvii)

58A.—(1) The Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1984 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 10 (registration of certain sleeping accommodation: buildings to which the provisions apply), in subsection (2) (exceptions)—

(a) in paragraph *(h)* (premises run by registered housing association), for "Part II of the Housing Act 1974" substitute "the Housing Associations Act 1985";

(b) in paragraph *(m)* (registered common lodging houses), for "section 238 of the Public Health Act 1936" substitue "Part XII of the Housing Act 1985"

(3) In section 39 (occupants removed from buildings to have priority housing need), for 'the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977' substitute "part III of the Housing Act 1985 (housing the homeless)".'.

No. 57, in page 40, line 12, at end insert—

'Local Government Act 1985 (c.51)

58B. In Schedule 13 to the Local Government Act 1985 (provisions with respect to residuary bodies) for paragraphs 22 and 23 (application of certain housing enactments) substitute—

"22. A residuary body shall be treated as a local authority for the purposes of the following provisions of the Housing Act 1985—

sections 43 and 44 (consent required for certain disposals of houses),

sections 45 to 51 (restrictions on recovery of service charges after disposal of house),

Parts IV and V (secure tenancies and the right to buy),

sections 442 (so far as related to agreements within subsection (1)*(b)*), 443 and 444, 452 and 453 (provision in connection with local authority mortgages), and

Part XVI (assistance for owners of defective premises disposed of by local authorities and others).

23. A residuary body shall be treated as a local authority for the purposes of sections 84(5)*(b)* and 85(4) of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (consultation on forms of agreement and meaning of "relevant advance").

24. A residuary body shall be treated as a local authority for the purposes of the following provisions of the landlord and Tenant Act 1985—

section 14(4) (exclusion of implied repairing obligations), and

sections 18 to 30 (service charges)." '.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

SCHEDULE 3

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 40, line 41, column 2, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.

No. 59, in page 40, line 42, column 1, after '427', insert 'of that Act'.

No. 60, in page 40, line 42, column 2, leave out '1985-86' and insert '1986-87'.

No. 61, in page 41, line 6, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.

No. 62, in page 41, line 12, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.

No. 63, in page 41, line 13, at end insert—

'Commencement of the Local Government Act 1985 (c. 51)

5.—(1) The consolidating Acts and the Local Government Act 1985 shall be construed and have effect as if the consolidating Acts had come into force immediately after that Act.

(2) References to a local authority in provisions of the consolidating Acts which confer powers, duties, rights or immunities by reference to things done by or in relation to a local authority before 1st April 1986 include references to the councils abolished by the Local Government Act 1985.

(3) Sub-paragraph (2) applies in particular to the following provisions—

section 45(2)*(b)* of the Housing Act 1985 (restriction on service charges payable after disposal of house by local authority),

section 444(4) of that Act and section 85(4) of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (power to agree to indemnify mortgagee of property disposed of by local authority),

section 573(1) of the Housing Act 1985 (definition of public sector authority for the purposes of assistance for persons having acquired defective housing from such an authority),

paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 4 to that Act (public sector landlords for purposes of qualifying period for the right to buy),

section 41(2) of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (approval of programme for purposes of housing association grant), and

section 14(4) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (exclusion of implied repairing obligation in case of lease granted by local authority).'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 3, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 4

SAVINGS

Amendments made: No. 64, in page 42, line 30, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.

No. 65, in page 42, line 36, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.

No. 66, in page 42, line 40, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.

No. 67, in page 45, line 38, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Landlord and Tenant Bill

Considered in Committee.

[Mr. Ernest Armstrong *in the Chair*]

Clauses Nos. 1 to 37 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 38

MINOR DEFINITIONS

Amendments made: No. 1, in page 21, line 22, leave out 'the Greater London Council,'.

No. 2, in page 21, line 24, at end insert

'and in sections 14(4), 26(1) and 28(6) includes the Inner London Education Authority and a joint authority established by Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985'.

No. 3, in page 21, line 25, leave out from 'authority"' to end of line 27 and insert

'has the meaning given by section 1 of the Housing Act 1985'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 38, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 39 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 40

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 4, in page 22, line 48, leave out '1st January' and insert '1st April'. — *[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 40, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order. Before we conclude what may seem to some a bizarre ritual, I wish, as a lawyer and housing spokesman, to say that what we have just done will make life much easier for many people. As the Law Commission said in its report, we have effectively consolidated the whole of housing law, the whole of landlord and tenant law and the whole of housing associations law into one measure. Only two other bits—the rent and leasehold legislation—remain elsewhere on the statute book.

In view of the difficulties faced by anybody who slogs from one piece of legislation to another trying to match them together—remembering that, in housing matters, non-lawyers as well as people trained to give legal advice must perform that task—the Solicitor-General was right to pay tribute to the Law Commission for endeavouring to ensure that we not only bring our law up to date and dispose of what should not be on the statute book, but make the law intelligible for those who must apply it.

If ever a subject was part of the day-to-day application of legislation, it is housing. Thanks to the work of the Law Commission, and with little thanks to ourselves, we have done a good deed in a bizarre and ritualistic way. I hope that people will be thankful for the last legislative act of this Session of this Parliament.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Further to the point of order. I respond to the words so gracefully spoken by the hon. Gentleman by saying that I should be sad if it were an accurate reflection that there was an inverse proportion between the words spoken in this Chamber and the good that we do. I am grateful for what he said and I am sure that his words will be gratefully received by those to whom they were addressed.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 56 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Social Security

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The next item on the Order Paper is the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous and Temporary Provisions Regulations 1985.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As these regulations are not being moved by the Government, is it in order for me to debate the Question that they be not moved?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the instrument is not moved, it is not before the House.

Mr. Brown: Why, then, does the Question need to be put? I understood that you called the Minister to move the regulations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why, then, is there no Question before the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The regulations were not moved, so they are not before the House. It is not a matter for me to decide. I can give the Minister the opportunity to move the instrument, but if he decides not to move it, then it is not before the House and, therefore, it cannot be debated.

Mr. Brown: I do not want to be difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have been long enough in the House to know that there is never an easy answer to some of the questions that hon. Members put to the Chair. However, I find it surprising that the Government should have given no explanation about why they are not moving the regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the Government, not for me. If they decide not to move an instrument, there is nothing that I can do about it.

Health Authorities (Resources)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*Mr. Neubert.]*

10.23 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I am glad to give the Minister this opportunity to answer some of the questions that my hon. Friends and I have been raising about the resources allocation in the south-west Thames region to one of its districts.

In the west Surrey and north-east Hampshire district health area there have been proposals to close and reduce three facilities, action which would have a major impact on the lives of people living there. I refer to the closure of the Fleet hospital, the cessation of surgery at Farnham hospital and the closure of a ward at Frimley Park general hospital.

Had such a proposal been tough but fair and in line with Government policy, I should have been inclined to accept it and explain to my constituents the rationale behind it, because in general terms I believe that the Government's policy is right. However, the effects of the proposal, if it were implemented, would be neither fair nor reasonable, a fact that has been accepted by the regional health authority and the Department of Health.

Historically, the district has been under-funded and this lack of resources has been exacerbated by the fact that we live in an area where growth in house building, and therefore new population, has been particularly rapid. The cumulative effect of this is that those within the area, my constituents among them, are being unfairly and ever increasingly discriminated against in the amount of health resources they receive.

Under the RAWP formula, which is the main plank of the Government's policy, the district is receiving about £78 per patient against a national average of £100 and a regional average of £109—in other words, considerably less than the resources to which it should be entitled. In our region, this imbalance is as great as in any region in the country. For example, the Wandsworth district receives £156, per patient, more than double the amount that is received by west Surrey or north-east Hampshire.

In addition, the district's performance indicators, which are the Government's measures of efficiency and productivity, are the best in the region. The cumulative effect of this is that the district with the least resources but the best record of efficiency is continually under-funded while others which operate less efficiently continue to be over-funded.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I thank my hon. Friend for raising this subject. I am also involved, as my constituency contains Farnham hospital. I ask my hon. Friend to reaffirm that in our district the efficiency of patient turnover and cost effectiveness are amongst the best in the country. Nobody is seeking an unfair allocation of resources. We all want a fair allocation of resources and the avoidance of waste in the interests of patient care. However, am I not right in thinking that our figures are among the best in the country?

Mr. Mates: My hon. Friend is quite right and no doubt the Minister will agree. These facts are not in dispute. I am sure that the Minister will agree that the sum total of these facts is an intolerable situation. However, despite the representations made to the Ministry, it is not prepared to

[Mr. Mates]

intervene in the region's management decisions. Despite representations to the region, it is not prepared to intervene in the district's management. The current jargon which has been used by the Minister himself is that management must not be second-guessed. I applaud the Government's efforts to sharpen up management, but they cannot simply back away from highly political decisions by saying that they are not prepared to intervene.

The Minister's job is to see that his policy is having the effect he intends. If not, he has the right and the duty, to give directions that the Government policy is carried out.

I recognise that the region has a difficult task in allocating its shrinking resources. I fully support the Government's decision to reallocate the resources from where they have been historically spent to areas where a new need has arisen. My point is that this admirable policy is being implemented only in a few health districts and that the Minister should ensure that his policy reaches down to the sharp end of the Health Service. We boast, and rightly so, that our record in health service provision in the past six years is second to none. The present policy should result in that excellent record being enhanced. If the Government are unable or unwilling to carry out fine tuning, when for a number of understandable reasons the policy is not working, we shall lose the argument.

My constituents are in an area where an unwanted growth in housing has been foisted upon them and it is no use telling them that the Government's policy is fair and sensible if the reality they see is the closure of and reduction in health services which are already under strain. Nor would I wish to try to do so.

Many Members try to plead special reasons why their constituents should be more favourably treated than others. This is not one of those occasions and forms no part of my argument. I am asking the Government for nothing to which our people are not entitled, nor am I asking the Government to change their policy. I ask only that, having frankly admitted that my constituents are being disadvantaged because of Government policies, the Minister should take steps to correct the situation. Thus I will be able to report that the Government's programme for distribution of health resources is sound and sensible, which I believe it to be, and it is seen to be fairly operated.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful for the opportunity which my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) has given me and the House to discuss the important problems to which he has drawn our attention. I congratulate him on the way in which he has demonstrated his concern. I know that that concern is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and others of my hon. Friends whose constituents serve within the relevant district health authority area.

Before turning to the details of the district and the problems to which my hon. Friend has referred, I hope that he will allow me to make one or two general points to set the issue in context. The title of the debate, which my hon. Friend requested, was "The Allocation of Resources within Regional Health Authorities". It is important to recognise that the resources that we are allocating nationally are increasing and have increased during the period of this Government at a significant rate. I know that my hon. Friend recognises that, but it is important that the message is communicated again and again to all our constituents. We have doubled spending in cash terms, and in real terms the increase has been over 20 per cent.

The issue is not limited to the transfer of resources because services have improved for patients. That is a measure by which we can stand to be judged, and we are happy to do so. There is often talk about waiting lists, but I regard that as a poor proxy measure. Our achievements in terms of the number of patients treated are much more significant. Only last year, the number of day cases treated nationally rose by 11 per cent. to 903,000 and the number of in-patient cases rose by 2·6 per cent. to 6·18 million. At the same time, we have seen capital expenditure increase significantly. In the five years between 1980 and 1984, there were 36 major new hospital schemes. Progress continues with over 75 major schemes to a total value in excess of £850 million.

My hon. Friend would rightly ask, "What about distribution?" I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends recognise that the significant transfer of resources to health care is commendable, especially at a time when public spending is rightly under pressure. But is distribution unfair, not least in the district health authority in my hon. Friend's constituency?

Reference has been made to the formidable animal called the Resource Allocation Working Party. The policy of RAWP has been in operation since 1976 and its objective has been accepted by virtually all those concerned, at least in outline. When it pinches on their own interests, however, different views often obtain. There is a broad acceptance of the ideas of RAWP, which are based on the principle of providing equal opportunity of access for health care needs for people at equal risk. The fundamental emphasis is on equality of access. Successive Governments have accepted and implemented the RAWP approach.

As my hon. Friend knows, the RAWP approach involves a complex calculation both of the revenue and capital implications of the target and the fair share of resources. Revenue targets are based fundamentally on relative populations. Population figures are weighted, first, to reflect the make-up of the population by age and sex and to reflect the use that the population makes of health services as analysed over six main blocks of services. Secondly, standardised mortality ratios are used, which the RAWP recommended could be used as a proxy for relative need for health care. This is a complex matter, but it has been accepted that it produces answers which will help to achieve equality of access to health care.

Other factors in the RAWP calculations reflect cross-boundary flows of patients, the existence of teaching facilities, the funding of a small number of supra-regional services and, in the case of the Thames regions, for London weighting. The capital formula is similiar to the complex revenue formula, but is based on population figures projected for the five years ahead of the year of allocation and they deliberately ignore cross-boundary flows.

The application of the RAWP formula to the south-west Thames regional health authority undoubtedly poses a difficult task for that authority over the next 10 years. As a Thames region, it will be expected to release an element of its historically high level of funding for redeployment elsewhere. At the same time, within the region, it has to

plan for revenue to be redistributed from some of its districts, including some in London, to others which its own internal RAWP formula shows are in need of extra money. My hon. Friend has referred to the needs of his district.

Without going further into the minutiae of these calculations, I should like to stress that it is for the regional health authority to determine in the first instance the basis of the principles that we have set nationally. I recognise my hon. Friend's point about the final responsibility of central Government. The district and regional levels are crucial factors in the balance of the operations of the Health Service. The DHSS has received and is examining regional strategic plans which set out the regions' intentions over the next decade. Those plans require ministerial approval. Obviously, my ministerial colleagues and I will be reviewing them carefully.

The south-west Thames regional health authority plan is being considered by the Department. It is expected that it will be with Ministers at the end of the year. Ministers will also have the opportunity to discuss the services and resources with the regional chairman and officers at the annual ministerial review meetings. There is a balance between the responsibilities and duties at the district and regional level and the DHSS.

Mr. Mates: I take that point. However, my hon. Friend is talking in terms of the strategic plan—we are talking about the immediate threat of closure. That is why there is a time element which is not on our side. Ministers should look at this aspect where policies are not working.

Mr. Whitney: My hon. Friend talks about the "immediate threat of closure". The proposal—it was no more than that — with respect to the three hospital facilities to which he referred has now been withdrawn. As I understand it, there is no immediate threat of closure. There is a need to ensure that within the RAWP formulae —nationally down to district health authority level—the proposals are implemented at a measured and sensible pace. There is a strict limit to the pace at which they can be pursued. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that the proposals which were floated and which caused such concern have been withdrawn.

Mr. Mates: Unilaterally, but we have not solved the problem. The problem will not go away—it might get worse. That is the real reason why I raised this matter. My hon. Friend should not wait and make the decision next April, because, by that time, the problem will be twice as bad.

Mr. Whitney: If my hon. Friend will allow me, because we are running fast out of time, I wish to draw his attention to two resources that are being moved into the district and must be taken into account in all the calculations. The west Surrey and north east Hampshire district will be receiving more than £5 million extra a year in revenue over the next 10 years. It is important to recognise that already this year that district has had significant financial help from the region. It has received an additional £400,000 a year in recurrent revenue; it has had non-recurrent bridging finance to help the mental illness sector to the tune of £644,000. The region has agreed to underwrite overspending in the mental illness sector this year of £200,000. That adds up to £1 million.

Planning has also started on an extension to the main district general hospital at Frimley Park to provide 110 extra beds. This will cost in excess of £7 million, and the region hopes to start work on it in 1987. Recognising that the district has a low base of capital stock, it bought the Brompton hospital site in the district last year at a cost of about £3·5 million. We should compare that with the position of a district in the same region which has to find ways of coping with a reduction of £1 million this year and nearly £14 million a year by 1994.

The regional chairman wrote to all district chairmen within his region, asking them to examine their spending patterns for the year and, if an overspend was projected, to put forward a package of measures to bring them back to target. The west Surrey and north east Hampshire district made public possible ward and hospital closures to curtail spending before having discussions with the authority and before going through the normal consultation process. As I have said, those plans are not going ahead.

The regional health authority has had to work out a policy for moving resources which it believes to be fair to every district—those that are under-provided as well as the better off ones. When decisions are made, much importance is attached to timing and to the minimum disruption both to the gainers and to the losers. It will be a matter of judgment how fast a pace can be sensibly maintained. In the timing we have to take account of the redistribution of resources to gainers and of the anticipated opening of major capital projects.

In the case of the west Surrey and north east Hampshire district, the bulk of its additional revenue will become available in 1990 and 1991 when the new extension to Frimley Park hospital should be ready to open. By then the district will be getting an extra £4·5 million a year out of a total of ·5·1 million planned for 1994.

It has long been our view that every health authority in the country should make every penny that it receives count in the service to patients. It is important that those districts which can show they are not so well off as they might be do not just sit back and wait for more money. They must review every aspect of their services to make sure that they are fully effective and efficient. We have asked authorities to provide cost improvement programmes which show a saving of at least 1 per cent. of their revenue base. Districts can then retain these savings to be used for service development as they think necessary. We have also encouraged authorities to put some of their housekeeping services — cleaning, laundry and catering — out to competitive tender as a means of making savings. The House should know that the south west Thames region has already made enormous progress in this area and is to be congratulated on the excellent results achieved.

I am aware that this district, as well as the Basingstoke and north Hampshire health authority will be affected by plans to build more dwellings in the area up to 1991. Naturally that causes concern to the health authorities which have to provide extra services for the additional population. I know that both districts have made representations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment about alterations to the structure plan which will propose that the number of new dwellings should be increased to 20,000. I assure my hon. Friend that I will write to the chairman of the two regional health authorities concerned and ask them whether these developments were taken into account when their 10-year resource plans were drawn up. If not, I hope they will

[Mr. Whitney]

consider looking again at the level of provision set aside for these districts in the context of their resource distribution policy.

I hope that what I have said will go at least some way —I must not be too optimistic—to reassure my hon. Friends that we recognise the pressures. I hope that they understand that the movement towards meeting their RAWP targets is happening, although it will not be at the pace that we should all like for reasons which I hope that we all understand. Nevertheless, the movement is in the right direction. The problems of the area are understood at district and regional levels and also in the Department, but we must continue to look for the good housekeeping which experience has shown can be achieved throughout the country.

I now appreciate that the alarm and dismay that was caused when the proposals were floated had a singularly unfortunate impact in the constituencies of my hon. Friends. I hope that they now recognise that the very significant transfer of resources that we are making to our health effort is producing results throughout the country and that their district is not being neglected but will be able to look forward to an increasing share of the resources available in years to come. We must, however, be governed by the realities of the problem and the need to balance, in this case, the demands of inner London against the growing demands creating by the rising population of my hon. Friend's district.

Mr. Mates: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. All that he has just said is correct, but——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make another speech unless the Minister has not yet concluded his remarks.

Mr. Whitney: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Mates: All that my hon. Friend the Minister has said reinforces the points that I have made. We are indeed short of resources, and resources are being reallocated slowly—I understand all the arguments about that—but proposals, for example, to close a ward at Frimley Park hospital when we are getting ready to build a whole new extension make the whole problem, which is really just an accounting problem, even more ludicrous in the eyes of the people in the district.

My hon. Friend the Minister talks of the proposals having being been withdrawn as though that meant that the problem had gone away. In fact, by refusing to carry out the region's instructions the district health authority has now put itself in the red, so the problem has not gone away. Indeed, there is a risk that it will get worse in the next six months and that even more severe cuts will be required next April when the overspend will have grown because the savings will not have been made because the proposals have been withdrawn. The Department's complacent view that it will all come out in the wash may be true in four or five years' time, but it is not true for those actually being deprived of patient care at this moment.

Mr. Whitney: I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that people are not being deprived of patient care at this moment. The proposals have been withdrawn, but the Department is certainly not complacent. There is an overall framework—we seem to agree on that—and the movement towards it is steady. Indeed, on the figures that I have given, I would say that the movement is impressive. Nevertheless, we must look to the district to play its part in meeting the imperatives which none of us can escape. Much has been achieved in many other districts by way of cost improvements and, indeed, rationalisation. From time to time that must include hospital closures because there are many small, inefficient and inaccessible hospitals. I make no comment on these particular instances, but in some circumstances that may well make sense because it is a major part of our policy—and one which I certainly stand by—that having appointed regional and district health authorities we must, within very broad parameters, allow them to make their management judgments within the resource implications that we impose. I was about to say "resource constraints", but it is important to recognise that the district health authority will have an expanding budget at its disposal. We look to the authority to use that expanding budget sensibly.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 30 October 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners: The House went:—and, having returned:

Royal Assent

3.10 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that the House has been to the House of Peers where a Commission under the Great Seal was read, authorising the Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Administration of Justice Act 1985
2. Oil and Pipelines Act 1985
3. Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985
4. European Communities (Finance) Act 1985
5. Insolvency Act 1985
6. Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985
7. Transport Act 1985
8. Housing Act 1985
9. Housing Associations Act 1985
10. Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
11. Housing (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985
12. Weights and Measures Act 1985
13. Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985
14. Associated British Ports (Point of Ayr) Order Confirmation Act 1985
15. Church of Scotland Trust (Amendment) Order Confirmation Act 1985
16. Dartmoor Commons Act 1985
17. Lincoln City Council Act 1985
18. Merseyside Development Corporation Act 1985
19. Cambridge City Council Act 1985
20. Birmingham City Council Act 1985
21. Hereford City Council Act 1985
22. Worcester City Council Act 1985
23. Clwyd County Council Act 1985

Prorogation

Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech

Mr. Speaker: I have further to acquaint the House that the Lord High Chancellor, one of the High Commissioners, delivered Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech to both Houses of Parliament, in pursuance of Her Majesty's Command. For greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy and directed that the terms of the Speech be printed in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are being made available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

The Duke of Edinburgh and I were pleased to receive the State Visits of the Life President of Malawi in April and the President of Mexico and Senora de la Madrid in June. We were saddened by the devastation caused by the earthquake in Mexico in September, for which my Government provided prompt assistance.

We recall with much satisfaction the State Visit to Portugal in March. I have also visited Belize, and was in the Bahamas for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Our tour of Commonwealth countries in the Eastern Caribbean is still in progress.

My Government welcomed the decision of the Maldives and of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to become full members of the Commonwealth.

My Government have maintained Britain's contribution to Western defence, and enhanced the United Kingdom's own defences through improvements in equipment and in the regular and reserve forces. They have played a full part in the Atlantic Alliance, and promoted British and Western defence interests outside the NATO area.

My Government have continued to work vigorously for agreements on verifiable arms control and disarmament, and to seek improved relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They warmly welcomed the opening of talks in Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union and fully support the United States' efforts to reach concrete agreements.

My Government have signed the Treaty on the Accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Communities, and have signed and ratified the third Convention of Lomé. An Act has been passed implementing the Fontainebleau Agreement on the future financing of the European Communities, including the correction of the British budgetary contribution.

My Government share the widespread public concern for the victims of the famine in Africa. They have continued to provide substantial emergency assistance both directly and through the European Community.

My Government have continued fully to honour their undertakings to the people of the Falkland Islands, while taking positive steps to seek more normal relations with Argentina. The Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong was signed last December and an Act consequent upon its terms was passed. My Government have reached agreement with Spain on the implementation of the Lisbon statement concerning Gibraltar.

[Mr. Speaker]

My Government have supported efforts to restore the independence and non-aligned status of Afghanistan. They have urged peaceful change in South Africa and the early independence of Namibia.

My Government welcomed to the United Kingdom in June the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. The great importance my Government attach to their relations with the Countries of South East and South Asia was marked by the Prime Minister's visit there in April and by the visit here this month of the Indian Prime Minister.

Members of the House of Commons

I thank you for the provision which you have made for the honour and dignity of the Crown and for the public service.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government have maintained the policies necessary to bring down inflation and sustain economic growth. Inflation remains low, the output of the nation is at its highest level ever and continues to increase, as does the number of people in work.

Further steps have been taken to help the unemployed into jobs by extending the Youth Training Scheme and enlarging the Community Programme, and in other ways, including a reform of the structure of national insurance contributions.

To promote economic efficiency and encourage the spread of share ownership, not least among employees, my Government have continued their programme of returning state-owned businesses to the private sector, including the successful public flotation of British Telecommunications.

An Act has been passed to complete the transition of the Trustee Savings Banks to full private sector status and to permit wide public participation in their ownership.

An Act has been passed to increase competition in the provision of local bus services in Great Britain and to enable the operations of the National Bus Company to be transferred to the private sector.

Legislation has been enacted to make further provision for the payment of grants to the National Coal Board and to abolish the British National Oil Corporation.

Legislation has been enacted to remove the statutory levy on cinema admissions, to provide for alternative financial assistance for film production and to reduce the regulatory burden on the film and cinema industries.

An Act has been passed for the better protection of food and the environment.

An Act has been passed to establish in England and Wales a Crown Prosecution Service independent of the police, and to enable time limits to be imposed on criminal proceedings.

An Act has been passed giving the right to vote at Parliamentary and European Parliament elections to many British citizens resident abroad, and extending postal and proxy voting to electors who cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person.

Legislation has been passed to establish a comprehensive statutory framework governing the interception of communications.

An Act has been passed to deal with the problem of drunkenness at designated sporting events.

Considerable advance has been made in the consolidation of our statute law; provision has been made to apply international Conventions on child abduction and for the administration of justice.

An Act has been passed to abolish the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan County Councils on 1st April 1986 and to transfer most of their functions to the borough and district councils.

In Northern Ireland, my Government have attached high importance to the maintenance of law and order. They have continued the search for ways in which responsibility can be returned to a local administration on a widely acceptable basis. They have sought to develop a solid working relationship with the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

For Scotland, measures have been passed to introduce a rebate scheme following rating revaluation, to establish trustee bodies to manage certain Scottish institutions, and to make a number of reforms in Scots law.

Legislation has been passed to reform insolvency law in England and Wales, and in Scotland.

My Government have published proposals to improve the quality of school education, the effectiveness of teachers and the development of higher education into the next decade.

My Government have conducted a fundamental review of the social security system and published proposals for radical reform.

In addition, my Government have protected the real value of the retirement pension and other related benefits, and passed an act to improve employees' rights under occupational pension schemes, and to extend statutory sick pay.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may attend you.

Thereafter a Commission for proroguing Parliament was read, after which the Lord Chancellor said:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

By virtue of Her Majesty's Commission which has been now read we do, in Her Majesty's name, and in obedience to Her Majesty's Commands, prorogue this Parliament to Wednesday the sixth day of November, to be then here holden, and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to Wednesday the sixth day of November next.

End of the Second Session (opened on 6 November 1984) of the Forty-Ninth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in the Thirty-Fourth Year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 21 October 1985

THE ARTS

Public Funding

29. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any proposals to increase the level of public funding for the arts.

Sir George Young: The Government are committed to keeping up the level of support for the arts. My hon. Friend will be announcing next year's arts budget in the normal way in due course.

London (Arts Provision)

30. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Minister for the Arts what recent representations have been received by the Government concerning provision for the arts in London following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend has received a few representations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Community (Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the amount of food and wine sent from the EEC to the Soviet Union, and eastern Europe, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested for the period 1976-1983 and 1984 is contained in replies given by my predecessor on 25 March 1985 at column *1-2* and 13 June 1985 at column *526-27* respectively. Figures are now available for the exports of wine in 1984; these record 72 thousand tonnes exported to the Soviet Union and 14 thousand tonnes to the rest of eastern Europe. Provisional information for the first half of 1985 is contained in the table.

*European community exports of the main agricultural commodities to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, January-June 1985 (provisional)**

	Soviet Union '000 tonnes	*Eastern Europe† (excluding USSR)* '000 tonnes
Wheat	2,975	547
Barley	2,058	210
Wheat Flour	oo	oo
Rice	oo	oo
Malt	94	0
Wholemilk powder	1	oo
Skimmed milk powder	0	oo
Condensed milk	oo	oo
Butter and butteroil	155	oo
Beef and veal	0	6
Pigmeat	0	oo
Poultrymeat	oo	2
Sugar, total (white equivalent)‡	oo	1
of which refined sugar	(oo)	(1)
Wine	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Eurostat

* relates to EC10 but excludes exports from Italy in June and from Greece in May and June.

† GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.

‡ including raw sugar, converted to white sugar: 1 tonne raw sugar = ·92 tonnes white sugar.

oo—less than 500 tonnes.

n.a.—not available.

European Community (Export Rebates)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount paid to British exporters by way of export rebates financed by or through the EEC for the export of food in the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: Refunds totalling £395 million were paid on exports of agricultural products (including some non-food items such as live animals and feed grains) from the United Kingdom to non-European community countries in 1984-85. The expenditure, which takes account of monetary compensatory amounts, was fully funded by the EC so that British agricultural exports can compete on world markets.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the action he now proposes to take to promote the conservation of salmon stocks.

Mr. Gummer: We hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Wine

Sir David Price asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what have been the results so far of his Department's investigations into the sale of contaminated wine in the United Kingdom; from which countries such wines have come; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: A surveillance exercise on the incidence of contamination of wine in the United Kingdom with diethylene glycol has been carried out by my Department. We tested samples drawn by us from retail outlets, sent to us by the trade and submitted for confirmatory analysis by public analysts. Seven hundred and seventeen samples of wine from 16 countries were tested. Seventy-six samples were found to contain diethylene glycol, some of which were Austrian wines, some German wines, some Italian wines and one a Hungarian wine which had been bottled in Germany and may well have been contaminated at that stage.

In addition local enforcement authorities carried out testing in the normal course of their duties and retailers and wine traders also carried out their own testing. The results of these tests are not available centrally.

The conclusion that we have drawn from the exercise was that this was a problem confined to some producers in Austria and certain bottlers in Europe; no contamination of other wines was detected.

Animals (Ritual Slaughter)

Mr. Heddle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to seek to amend the legislation governing the ritual slaughter of poultry, sheep, pigs and cattle.

Mr. Steel asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on ritual slaughter, he will make a statement on his intentions with regard to legislation to implement its recommendations.

Mrs. Fenner: The Farm Animal Welfare Council published its report in July and we immediately sought comments from interested organisations. This consultation period is not yet concluded. We will wish to consider the report's recommendations carefully in the light of all representations made before taking decisions.

Food and Environment Protection Act 1985

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations have been made to Her Majesty's Government by the European Community Commission or other European agencies concerning the operation of the Food and EnvironmentProtection Act 1985, and the extent to which fungicides meet criteria for the protection of the environment with particular regard to insecticidal action against beneficial insects and in the context of progress towards common European standards.

Mrs. Fenner: None.

Badgers

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the review of the policy of destroying badgers in areas where they are thought to pose a threat to cattle has now been completed.

Mrs. Fenner: The review of policy is still in progress. I now expect that the review team will be in a position to report to us early in 1986.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any of the cattle near Eastbourne that were monitored following the discovery of bovine tuberculosis in some badgers have also manifested the disease; how many cattle were studied; for how long; when the monitoring will cease; and what have been the conclusions.

Mrs. Fenner: Three cattle in the Eastbourne area of east Sussex reacted to the tuberculin test in 1984 and 28 during the period January to September 1985. These animals were from an area occupied by some 1,600 cattle which, from the beginning of this year, have been subject to six-monthly tuberculin tests because of the known presence of high levels of infection in badgers in the area. Other cattle in east Sussex are tuberculin tested at frequencies varying from one to three years. No date has been fixed for the ending of more frequent testing of the animals in the area near Eastbourne but the situation is being kept under review. The disclosure of reactors in the last two years has confirmed the risk posed to cattle by infected badgers. It is too early to draw conclusions from the results of the intensified cattle testing regime now in place.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of badgers killed in 1984 and so far in 1985 in order to deal with bovine tuberculosis; and in each case what was the location, the method of killing, and the method of capture.

Mrs. Fenner: The normal method of killing is by shooting with a pistol after capture. A full analysis, including methods of capture, is set out in the table.

1984

	Trapped	*Snared*	*Shot in the open*	*Netted*	*Total*
Avon	76	1	—	—	77
Cornwall	365	4	1	—	370
Cumbria	18	2	—	—	20
Devon	172	7	—	8	187
Dorset	106	—	1	—	107
Dyfed	23	—	—	—	23
Gloucester	353	1	3	—	357
East Sussex	47	—	—	—	47
Stafford	10	15	—	—	25
Wiltshire	50	1	1	—	52
Total	1,220	31	6	8	1,265

1985 (January to September)

	Trapped	*Snared*	*Shot in the open*	*Netted*	*Total*
Avon	87	—	1	—	88
Cornwall	200	7	—	—	207
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	—
Devon	27	—	—	—	27
Dorset	139	—	2	—	141
Dyfed	44	1	1	—	46
Gloucester	174	2	—	—	176
East Sussex	—	—	—	—	—

	*1985 (January to September)				
	Trapped	*Snared*	*Shot in the open*	*Netted*	*Total*
Stafford	—	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	51	—	—	1	52
Total	722	10	4	1	737

*Provisional figures

Note: The above figures exclude badgers found dead in areas in which official investigations were taking place

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of cases of bovine tuberculosis among cattle in controlled areas in 1984 and so far in 1985.

Mrs. Fenner: Forty-two new herds with visible lesion reactors were disclosed in 1984 in the control areas scheduled in the Badger (Control Areas) Order 1977. The corresponding provisional figure for the period January to June 1985 was 26.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of cases of bovine tuberculosis among cattle in 1983, 1984 and so far in 1985 attributed to the illegal movement of diseased cattle; where they occurred; and what was the number of cattle involved.

Mrs. Fenner: In 1983, 1984 and so far in 1985 no outbreaks of bovine tuberculosis in cattle have been attributed to the illegal movement of diseased cattle. However, nine confirmed outbreaks in 1983 were attributed to the legal movement of cattle that subsequently proved to have been diseased. The corresponding provisional figures for 1984 and for the first half of 1985 are 15 and ten outbreaks respectively.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take following representations he has received from the North Marianas on the dumping of nuclear waste in the Pacific.

Mr. Gummer: I have received no such representations.

Moorland

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks or other screening exists to prevent damage to moorland by reseeding or regeneration through grant aided agricultural improvements *(a)* within sites of special scientific interest and national parks and *(b)* in the wider countryside.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 22 July 1985, c. *624*]: I wish to make it clear that the statutory instruments introducing the new capital grant arrangements on 1 October specifically exclude heathland and moorland from the definition of grassland for which improvement grants are available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Murphy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the 18th EEC directive relating to value added tax.

Mr. Gow: Customs and Excise has consulted a wide range of representative trade and professional bodies about the draft 18th EC Directive on VAT and the associated draft 19th Directive. I have received their report, and I am considering our policy towards those proposals which will affect the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the early payment of non-value added tax own resources to the European Communities in August and subsequent months.

Mr. Gow: In accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77, the Commission invited member states to pay on 20 August instead of 20 September non-VAT own resources collected in July. It also invited payment on 20 September instead of 21 October, and on 21 October instead of 20 November, of such own resources collected in August and September respectively. These own resources consist of agricultural, sugar and isoglucose levies and customs duties. The Government have complied with these requests.

A sum of £120 million was paid on 20 August and sums of £120 million and £118 million were paid on 20 September and 21 October respectively. The payments of levies and duties on the usual dates made under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972, were or will be reduced by appropriate amounts; there will therefore be no net addition to public expenditure.

Trustee Savings Bank (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Treasury counsel who gave advice prior to the introduction of the Trustee Savings Banks Bill on the ownership of the Trustee Savings Bank Scotland was qualified in Scottish law.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Those who advise the Government on Scots law are naturally qualified to do so.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Onslow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will amend the regulations governing the purchase of premium bonds in such a way as to enable godparents to buy bonds for their godchildren.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no plans for this, but the Department of National Savings is about to put on sale a new range of gift tokens, including three designs for

premium bonds, which will help godparents to give presents to their godchildren which can be exchanged for premium bonds at post offices.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what annual changes have taken place in gross domestic product in real terms since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: This information is available in the 1985 edition of United Kingdom National Accounts (published in September) which shows both the level of, and year to year changes in, the average measure of gross domestic product at constant factor cost.

Treaty Shopping

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to amend tax treaties to prevent treaty shopping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The Inland Revenue keeps the United Kingdom network of tax treaties under continual review and look for evidence of abuse. If the hon. Lady writes to me about any particular cases she has in mind I shall look into them.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department has spent on office furniture, carpets and curtains and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gow: Prior to 1 April 1983 when the Property Repayment Service was introduced, this expenditure was borne centrally by the Property Services Agency. Expenditure since 1 April 1983 is as follows:

(£ thousand)

	1983-84	*1984-85*	**1985-86*
Office furniture and curtains	41	208	60
Carpets	14	68	9

* Up to 30 September 1985.

Office decorating is carried out by the Property Services Agency as part of the maintenance service; separate figures are not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rating under the business expansion scheme for £1 invested for a person paying tax at a marginal rate of *(a)* 60 per cent. and *(b)* 30 per cent.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Government have any plans to offer individuals paying tax at a marginal rate of 30 per cent. the equivalent relief under the business expansion scheme for each £1 invested to that now available to an individual taxed at a marginal rate of 60 per cent.

Mr. Moore: No.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether business expansion schemes relief is made available to companies which purchase other businesses as going concerns where no new investment is promised.

Mr. Moore: BES relief is given to the investor, not the company he invests in, and is available only if there is new investment in a qualifying company. Subject to certain conditions, the BES company may then use the proceeds of that investment, or any other resources available to it, to acquire the trade of another business which it intends to carry on.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will provide a breakdown between business expansion scheme relief allocated to individuals and to qualifying business expansion scheme funds, respectively;

(2) what is the average amount of relief claimed by individuals making qualifying business expansion scheme investments; and what is the average rate of taxation so relieved.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Venture Capital

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what information he has as to whether the Treasury's definition of the term venture capital is comparable with definition adopted by other European Economic Community countries;

(2) what is the Treasury's definition of the term venture capital; and whether this includes *(a)* capital made available to any persons by banks or licensed deposit takers, *(b)* loan capital, preference share capital or ordinary equity share capital and *(c)* capital available to persons carrying on trades which are excluded from the scope of the business expansion scheme;

(3) what information he has about any published or unpublished records of the provision and sources of venture capital in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cable and Wireless

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's residual shareholding in Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Moore: The Government announced on 5 September that, subject to market conditions, they intended to sell their remaining ordinary shares in Cable and Wireless during the current financial year. The sale of part of the Government's continuing programme of privatisation and is in line with the policy announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 14 March 1984 (*Hansard* col. 420) of selling Government minority holdings in privatised companies as and when circumstances permit.

Pending parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, urgent payments in connection with Government sale expenses are being met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Prime Ministers (Pensions)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what pensions are currently paid to each former Prime Minister; and how annual changes in such pensions are calculated.

Mr. Gow: Under section 26 of the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1972, former Prime Ministers on leaving office are awarded pensions of 15/40ths of their full salary, irrespective of length of service. Increases are paid each year from the same date and by the same amount as the increase in the additional component of the state pension, which is linked to the retail prices index. This is subject to the pension in payment not exceeding the amount of pension that would be paid to the current Prime Minister on leaving office.

It is not normal practice to publish details of individual pensions. The basic pension entitlements of former Prime Ministers are set out in the supplementary statements on the Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts (section 1, annuities and pensions). With the addition of pension increases the majority of pensions in payment to former Prime Ministers are at the maximum current entitlement of £15,709 per annum.

Budget Council

Mr. Couchman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the Budget Council on 17-18 September.

Mr. Gow: I represented the United Kingdom at this Council in Luxembourg.

After meeting a delegation from the European Parliament the Council considered the proposals contained in the Commission's 1986 preliminary draft budget. The Council then established a draft budget for 1986 by qualified majority.

The draft budget respects the 1986 reference framework set by the ECOFIN Council in July, with limited additions for enlargement, and is consistent with the budget discipline conclusions agreed by the Council in December 1984.

Provision is made on the revenue side for the United Kingdom to receive a VAT abatement of 1·4 billion ecu, in accordance with the conclusions of the Fontainebleau European Council.

The expenditure agreed by the council totals 32,056 million ecu of payment appropriations and 34,218 million ecu of commitment appropriations. These figures include a 1,652 million ecu rebate of own resources to Spain and Portugal under the agreed transitional arrangements. The Council agreed 21,012 million ecu of payment and commitment appropriations for agricultural guarantee expenditure; this is consistent with the 1986 agricultural guideline. It also provided 6,537 million ecu of payment appropriations and 8,782 million ecu of commitment appropriations for non-obligatory expenditure. These increases are within the 1986 maximum rate of 7·1 per cent.

The Council set the same levels of food aid provision, 508 million ecu of payment appropriations and 636 million ecu of commitment appropriations, as in the 1985 adopted budget whose levels were higher than those generally agreed in previous years. The Council stated that it would continue to monitor developments in the countries concerned and declared itself ready to review the arrangements made in the light of requirements.

The draft budget has now been forwarded to the European Parliament.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Appeals

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give a breakdown as between successful and unsuccessful appeals in each of the last three years in cases where parents were dissatisfied with the initial choice of secondary school to which their child was allocated in *(a)* England, *(b)* Essex and *(c)* Basildon; and if he will indicate the total number of appeals in each category.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available.

Microelectronics Education Programme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the future level of spending on the microelectronics education programme planned for each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 23 July 1985 at column 515.

PRIME MINISTER

Middle East Visit

Mr. Spearing asked the Prime Minister which Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers accompanied her on her recent visit to the middle east.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

None. My right hon. Friend was, however, accompanied by a senior Foreign Office official, in addition to members of her own staff.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent visit to the middle east.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend visited Egypt from 16-18 September and Jordan from 18-20 September. This was the first visit by a British Prime Minister in office to Cairo since Mr. Churchill in 1943, and the first ever to Jordan. My right hon. Friend reviewed our excellent bilateral relations with both countries and had valuable talks on international issues, particularly the middle east. My right hon. Friend reaffirmed our full support for King Hussein and President Mubarak in the search for a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israel dispute. My right hon. Friend also visited projects in both countries in which British industry is closely involved.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will now make a statement on the talks which have taken place between the British and Irish Governments regarding Northern Ireland.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

No. It would be premature to make a statement at this stage. A full statement will be made at the appropriate moment, and Parliament will have the opportunity to debate any proposals that may emerge.

Broadcasting (Programme Content)

Dr. Marek asked the Prime Minister on how many occasions since May 1979 Her Majesty's Government have tendered advice to the British Broadcasting Corporation or the Independent Broadcasting Authority about its programme content *(a)* in advance of transmission of a particular item or programme and *(b)* after the transmission of a particular item or programme, and if she will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

No central record is kept of contacts between Governmental Departments and the broadcasting authorities on programmes planned by or transmitted by them. The Home Secretary of the day and the Prime Minister have made representations on various occasions since 1979 about the coverage of Irish terrorism, the reporting of the Falklands conflict and the reporting of the views of Sikh extremists in this country. In 1980, the then Foreign Secretary made public his views about the programme "Death of a Princess". When expressing their view, the Government have consistently made it clear that final decisions on the content of programmes are entirely a matter for the broadcasting authorities.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister (1) what has been the total cost of Chequers in each of the past six years;

(2) how much has been spent by her office on foreign travel in each of the past six years;

(3) how much has been spent on No. 10 Downing street in each of the past six years in respect of *(a)* total running costs, *(b)* staffing, *(c)* repairs and maintenance, *(d)* decoration, *(e)* furniture and *(f)* rates.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Commonwealth Conference

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent visit to the Bahamas.

The Lord Privy Seal: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Parliamentary Pensions Acts

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Attorney-General if he will institute preparatory steps necessary to facilitate consolidation of the Parliamentary Pensions Acts during the next Session of Parliament.

The Attorney-General: The programme for the consolidation of statutes is the responsibility of the Law Commission. It does not include this legislation at present but it is always open to hon. Members to suggest topics for consolidation to the commission.

Pahoomal Family

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General what representations the Director of Public Prosecutions has received for the extradition of members of the Pahoomal family; and, of these, which were received in 1982 and 1983.

The Solicitor-General: The City of London police submitted a report to the Director of Public Prosecutions in June 1983. He has received no other representations.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if he will ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to reopen his consideration of the case of the Pahoomal family.

The Solicitor-General: Police inquiries are continuing and the case remains under active consideration by the director.

HMS Conqueror

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General if the investigation of possible offences in respect of the disappearance of the control room log of HMS Conqueror has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I refer to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 30 November 1984. The Metropolitan police have now submitted their report on this matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who has concluded that the evidence available fails to show that any person committed a criminal offence in connection with the disappearance of the logs. He has also concluded that there is no reasonable prospect of further investigations producing any evidence of the commission of a criminal offence. I agree with both of these conclusions, and the police investigation has therefore been discontinued.

CIVIL SERVICE

Politicisation

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister for the Civil Service what recent representations he has received from Sir Douglas Wass on the desirability of having an independent body to investigate complaints by serving civil servants about alleged politicisation of the Civil Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received no representations from Sir Douglas Wass, but I have read his article in *The Political Quarterly* for July-September 1985.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

BBC and IBA (Competition)

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to seek to ensure that the arrangements made by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Independent Broadcasting Authority or its contractors for the

acquisition of film or other programme material are consistent with the Government's policy on competition; if he will refer these arrangements, with particular reference to the circumstances surrounding the purchase by Thames Television of the Dallas programme, to the Director General of Fair Trading for examination; and whether he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to satisfy himself that there are no arrangements made by the British Broadcasting Corporation or Independent Television for the purchase of programme material that are in contravention of the provisions of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act.

Mr. Howard: The Director General of Fair Trading has statutory powers to initiate appropriate action under the competition legislation in respect of any arrangements that may exist between the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Independent Broadcasting Authority or independent television companies concerning the acquisition of film or other programme material.

The Director General has written to the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Independent Television Companies Association making inquiries in connection with the purchase of overseas television programmes. In reply, all three bodies have denied the existence of arrangements concerning the purchase of film or other programme material which might require registration under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976.

The Office of Fair Trading is now considering whether, in the light of these replies and other information available to it, further action is justified under the competition legislation.

Shipbuilding (Intervention Fund)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate the level of intervention fund allowable on each vessel built in the United Kingdom following the European Economic Community 5th directive on shipbuilding.

Mr. Butcher: Shipbuilding Intervention Fund is a form of selective financial assistance and is paid at the minimum level necessary to secure individual contracts. As regards the general levels allowable,,I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) on 5 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone).

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money will be made available from the shipbuilding intervention fund to United Kingdom shipbuilders in the coming financial year.

Mr. Butcher: On present estimates £43 million will be made available in 1985-86 for grants under the Shipbuilding Intervention Fund in Great Britain, but the actual amount paid will depend on contracts secured.

Shipbuilding (Restructuring)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent the United Kingdom shipbuilding industry has complied with previous European Economic Community directives in respect of restructuring proposals; and what information he has regarding the extent to which other European Economic Community member states have also complied.

Mr. Butcher: The European Commission has been and continues to be satisfied that United Kingdom support for shipbuilding complies with the relevant EC directives. We have no access to the confidential information provided to the Commission by other member states in order to satisfy the Commission of their own compliance with these directives.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what commitments Her Majesty's Government have given to other European Community states with shipbuilding interests in relation to the further restructuring of the United Kingdom shipbuilding industry, with reference to the European Economic Community shipbuilding 5th directive.

Mr. Butcher: None. Discussions on restructuring are conducted with the Commission and not with other member states. We have explained to the Commission British Shipbuilders' current plans for privatisation of the warship yards and for regional reorganisation.

Soft Loans

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made by Her Majesty's Government in considering and introducing soft loans as an incentive to British exports since his statement in the House on 18 July.

Mr. Channon: We are considering ways in which the aid and trade provision might be used to support long-term low-interest loans, similar to those which many of our competitors offer to developing countries. We hope to reach our decisions soon.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those companies in the United Kingdom manufacturing flue gas desulphurisation equipment and the value of any export orders achieved over the last five years.

Mr. Channon: Manufacturers of flue gas desulphurisation equipment are not specifically identified in statistical inquiries and statistics on export orders for such equipment are not available. Among the firms who are known to have the capability of manufacturing such equipment are Babcock Power Ltd, Davy McKee, Foster Wheeler Power Products Ltd, Lodge Cottrell Ltd and NEI International Combustion Ltd. It is believed that a small number of overseas orders have been secured, the details of which would be confidential.

Safety of Goods

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to be in a position to implement the proposals contained in the White Paper on the safety of goods, concerning the free importation, distribution, and sale of goods that do not meet statutory safety regulations.

Mr. Howard: The Government are firmly committed to the proposals in the 'Safety of Goods' White Paper. We shall implement the proposals as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received advocating a change in consumer protection legislation to safeguard retailers in regard to the quality of the products supplied to them by manufacturers as well as wholesalers, particularly for the licensed trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: A retailer's rights in dealing with manufacturers or wholesalers will be governed by the terms of his contract with them. In the absence of any specific terms in the contract to the contrary (and these terms would be subject to the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977) the provisions of the sale of goods legislation apply to these contracts as well as to contracts between a retailer and his customers.

Draught Beer

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received advocating an end to the practice of draught beer being supplied in containers as opposed to barrels with a minimum content mark on each; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Licensees' representatives have, from time to time, asked for legislation to require a statement of the measure of beer to accompany deliveries from breweries.

I believe that this is very much a practical problem to be resolved within the trade and I understand that brewers are continuing their efforts to reach an acceptable solution.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to satisfy himself of the adequacy of the current level of staffing in his Department for technical experts dealing with applications under COCOM regulations.

Mr. Channon: I am concerned that applications under the COCOM arrangements should be dealt with as quickly as possible, and I am keeping this matter under close review. The staff devoted to this work have recently been increased, and a further increase is in prospect.

Telecommunications Industry

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the maintenance of the competitive position of the United Kingdom domestic telecommunications industry through the use of import restraints and exports promotion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The United Kingdom industry is fully competitive in terms of price, performance and delivery. Protective measures will not improve the long-term position. However, some overseas markets are not open and we are giving full support to international efforts to reduce the barriers to free trade in telecommunications. Support for exports may also be given, according to the circumstances of each individual case.

Telephone Sales

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received from members of the public regarding telephone selling techniques towards potential customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: During the last three months my predecessor and I have received 10 complaints from the public about telephone selling, mainly from people who object in principle to being approached in this way.

The Director General of Fair Trading published a report on this subject in October 1984 and has been encouraging the trade to adopt a set of new guidelines for its promotional activities. British Telecom is including these guidelines in telephone directories. The trade associations with whom this has been discussed so far have agreed to follow these guidelines. I agree with the Director General that self regulation by the trade remains the appropriate course.

Companies (Research and Development)

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to require companies to state in their balance sheets the amount of money that is spent by them on research and development.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to do so at this stage. I will consider the position again following the review, by the Accounting Standards Committee of SSAP13, the accounting standard on research and development.

Overseas Contracts

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when, and in what manner, he published the revised arrangements for Government assistance to firms bidding for overseas contracts with a development content; what are the changes in procedure described as streamlining and in what manner they differ from the current practice; what financial estimates are, or will be, made from his Department in respect of the revised scheme; and what part officials from his Department will play in the determination of the distribution of the public expenditure concerned.

Mr. Channon: The guidance for applicants for support under the aid and trade provision will be revised to take into account modifications already agreed, such as the eligibility of China, and those under discussion, including the possibility of a soft loan facility. Procedures have been streamlined through changes in arrangements for interdepartmental scrutiny.

Funds for the aid and trade provision, which forms part of the aid programme, will be settled in the current public expenditure round. My Department will continue to handle applications from companies, preparing them for discussion with the Overseas Development Administration.

Tape Imports

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the implications of the introduction of a tape levy for the level of counterfeit tape imports, both of stamped or unstamped tapes.

Mr. Butcher: The decision whether or not to introduce a copyright levy on blank recording tape will take account of all relevant factors, including the question of counterfeit

blank tape imports. We hope soon to publish our conclusions on the levy, and other matters of copyright reform, in a White Paper.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set up an inquiry into applications for export credit guarantees from customers of Johnson Matthey Bankers from 1981 to the present day.

Mr. Channon: No. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer informed the House on 17 July, Johnson Matthey Bankers has requested the Commissioner of the City of London police to conduct a preliminary inquiry into certain accounts with the bank which are the subject of large losses. The Export Credits Guarantee Department will co-operate fully with the police in their inquiries.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the average error when monthly balance of trade figures are compared with the final outturn; and if there has been any statistical improvement in the accuracy of monthly balance of trade figures in the past decade.

Mr. Channon: The information is given in the table. The revisions result from changes in definition as well as the incorporation of later information. There has been no statistical improvement in the accuracy of the monthly figures over the last decade.

Revisions to UK visible trade balance:

	Monthly average £ million*
1975	72
1976	50
1977	80
1978	88
1979	97
1980	66
1981	114
1982	106
1983	151
1984	70

* Average revision, without regard to sign, in the monthly estimates of the UK visible trade balance, seasonally adjusted on a balance of payments basis, since first published.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list by model, make and other identifying marks all the products currently manufactured in the United Kingdom which contain polychlorinated biphenyls and similar compounds; and if he will place a copy of this list in the Library.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Polychlorinated biphenyls have not been manufactured in the United Kingdom since 1977, and I have no knowledge of any current manufacture in this country of any products containing either polychlorinated biphenyls or polychlorinated terphenyls.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list by model, make and other identifying marks all the products currently being imported into the United Kingdom which contain polychlorinated biphenyls and similar compounds; and if he will place a copy of this list in the Library.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Available statistical information does not identify products which contain polychlorinated terphenyls or polychlorinated biphenyls. Like the United Kingdom, many other countries have ceased production of polychlorinated biphenyls and polychlorinated terphenyls, or are in the process of doing so. Imports of products containing these substances are thought to be neglible.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the Alvey programme software engineering work has gone to the Ministry of Defence or defence-related projects.

Mr. Pattie: The Alvey Programme is expected to provide £40 million Government funds for about 85 projects in software engineering. In these Ministry of Defence participation is currently limited to the unfunded supervision of RSRE Malvern of one academic study costing £10,000. Discussions are also in progress on a possible small RSRE participation in one major project, the £5·5 million-ICL-STC-BGC-PRAXIS-University of Manchester IPSE 2·5 project to develop advanced software tools. No Alvey software project is specifically defence related: projects set out to tackle generic issues critically important to all software producers and users, defence or civil.

European Space Agency

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what agreements exist with the United States of America concerning military use of European Space Agency facilities and equipment;

(2) what uses have been made of European Space Agency facilities by military agencies in the United States of America;

(3) what uses are likely to be made of European Space Agency facilities by military agencies in the United States of America in the next two years.

Mr. Pattie: No such agreements exist. In any event ESA's convention limits the use of its facilities to peaceful purposes.

Private Sector Employers

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the top 50 United Kingdom private sector employers, showing in each case the number of employees employed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Information on employment by individual United Kingdom private sector companies is collected by the Department under the Statistics for Trade Act 1947. The provisions of this Act prevent the Department from disclosing information on individual undertakings. Figures for employment in United Kingdom companies are published in *The Times 1000* and in *Key British Enterprises* by Dunn and Bradstreet, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Capital Investment

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the annual rate of capital investment in (i) manufacturing and (ii) distribution and services for each year since 1970 at constant 1975 prices.

Mr. Butcher: Available information is given in the following table:

Industry's Capital Expenditure

	*£ million at 1980 prices**	
	Manufacturing Industry†	*Distribution and Services Industries‡*
1970	7,990	10,399
1971	7,292	11,012
1972	6,345	11,336
1973	6,786	12,548
1974	7,431	12,045
1975	7,135	10,170
1976	6,838	10,208
1977	7,253	10,993
1978	7,904	11,744
1979	8,230	12,991
1980	7,314	12,964
1981	5,698	12,238
1982	5,516	12,998
1983	5,557	13,395
1984	6,373	15,359

* As constant price series are currently expressed in terms of 1980 prices, information at 1975 prices is not readily available for recent years.
† Divisions 2-4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980), including assets leased to manufacturers.
‡ Divisions 6-9 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980), excluding assets leased from the financial industries.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the changes in the administrative arrangements to be made in the aid and trade provision in respect of expenditure in current Estimates; what changes he expects to be made in respect of the disbursement of these funds; what are the criteria for accepting any application on the basis of its developmental desirability; and in what form these criteria are publicly available.

Mr. Raison: Steps have been taken to streamline inter-departmental scrutiny of aid and trade provision proposals.

Consideration of a proposed new soft loan mechanism, including discussions with the financial community, is almost complete. Criteria for the use of aid and trade provision in support of particular projects are the same as those applicable to other aid-funded activities. This is set out in the "Guidance rules for British exporters applying for support from the Aid and Trade Provision", which will shortly be revised, and placed in the Library of the House.

Grenada

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the amount of aid given to the Government of Grenada since October 1983 and about pledges of future aid and conditions attached.

Mr. Raison: Figures for part-years are not available but disbursements of British bilateral aid to Grenada for 1983 and 1984 were £85,000 and £693,000 respectively. An interest-free loan of £5 million agreed in August 1985 has a 5-year grace period and is repayable over 15 years. It is tied 50 per cent. to British procurement. Grenada will also receive part of a regional grant of £4·5 million towards the cost of a coastguard shore facility at St Georges.

ENERGY

Wave Power

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will summarise the evidence on which he based his decision to cease to fund research into power production using ocean waves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is unlikely that wave energy for large scale use in the United Kingdom will be cost effective since a detailed cost analysis by our consultants has concluded that there is only a low probability of any design achieving an energy cost below 9p/kwhr (1984 money values). It is therefore appropriate to round off our research in this field, although we will be receptive to any realistic new ideas which could lead to major cost reductions. The evidence is summarised in "Wave Energy" ETSU R26, which is in the Library of the House.

Experimental Boreholes

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy why Her Majesty's Government are ending funding for experimental boreholes for drilling for hot water at Southampton, Cleethorpes, Marchwood and Larne; and what conveniently available figures he has for the cost of capping and making safe the boreholes.

Mr. David Hunt: The research programme to which my Department has committed some £10 million over the past 9 years has shown that the United Kingdom geothermal aquifer resource is very limited in size and the prospects for its commercialisation are poor. I have therefore decided to discontinue work in this field. No decisions have yet been made on the existing boreholes at Southampton, Cleethorpes, Marchwood and Larne. Current estimates are that the cost of permanent capping and permanently making safe these boreholes would be £100,000 each.

Uranium

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the intended uses of depleted uranium exported by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: I am informed by BNFL that, in the last three years, it has exported depleted uranium for the following uses:

(a) development work on nuclear fuel production;
(b) as samples to demonstrate the capabilities of BNFL technologies to potential customers;
(c) as radiation shielding;
(d) as colouring for ceramics and glazes;
(e) as an additive in the production of special steels;
(f) for use in research and development work;
(g) as isotopic reference standards.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has as to the organisation and

outcome of the monitoring and control by international organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member of the subsequent movements of consignments of depleted uranium exported by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. in each of the last three years;

(2) what representations have been made to Her Majesty's Government by the International Atomic Energy Agency about the subsequent destination of depleted uranium exported by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. to International Metals SA of Luxembourg and the implications of this incident for the operation of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom supplies information about depleted uranium movements to the safeguards authorities of Euratom and the IAEA. No representations have been made by either body to Her Majesty's Government about diverted material. In 1984 the safeguards system detected a shipment of depleted uranium from Luxembourg to Israel which was made without due notification. BNFL had previously exported depleted uranium to International Metals SA of Luxembourg under safeguards. The annual safeguards statements contained in the IAEA's Annual Reports up to 1984 show that with the one exception noted above, there were no anomalies in the shipments of depleted uranium monitored by the agency.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will issue a general direction to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to prohibit the sale by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. of depleted uranium for export; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to permit the export of depleted uranium only if conditions are imposed requiring any subsequent disposal to be in accordance with the provisions of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the purposes for which they authorise the export of depleted uranium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Exports of nuclear materials are only authorised in accordance with the policy laid down by the then Foreign Secretary in 1976 [Vol. 980, c. 514-516]. All applications for licences to export depleted uranium are examined on a case by case basis in the light of this policy.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what have been the levels of exports of depleted uranium in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Export licences were approved in respect of applications to export depleted uranium from the United Kingdom in the years 1980 to 1984 as follows:

Year	*Tonnes*
1980	50
1981	60
1982	70
1983	30
1984	130

Energy Managers

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column 35, what success he has had with his proposals to encourage the appointment of energy managers in both public and private sectors.

Mr. David Hunt: Membership of energy management groups has increased by 70 per cent. over the last 2 years, and is still growing.

Many private companies have appointed energy managers after attending ministerial briefings; we are at present conducting a survey to establish the facts. Most local authorities have now designated energy officers. In central Government, the Prime Minister has instructed every Department to appoint an energy manager.

Coal (Cost)

Mr. Ron Davis asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will outline by area the sulphur content, thermal content and cost per tonne of coal delivered to power stations operated by the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB advises that, on the basis of its latest evaluation, the sulphur content and thermal content per tonne of coal delivered to CEGB power stations from the various NCB sales areas and other suppliers is as follows:-

	CV (net giga joules per tonne)	*Sulphur (percentage by weight)*
Scotland	23·0	1·0
North Eastern	24·7	1·6
Yorkshire	23·2	1·7
North Midlands	22·9	1·5
South Midlands	22·0	1·7
Western	23·9	1·6
South Wales	25·2	1·2
CEGB Average	23·4	1·6

Information concerning power stations operated by the SSEB is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, I understand that the SSEB's advice to him is that the position in relation to their power stations is as follows:-

	CV (net giga joules per tonne)	*Sulphur (percentage by weight)*
SSEB	21·6	0·76

Delivered costs of coal are the subject of confidential agreements with CEGB and SSEB suppliers.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Ron Davis asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement regarding the existing operation or introduction of flue gas desulphurisation techniques at each of Britain's oil refineries.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a matter for the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate. I understand that flue gas desulphurisation is not appropriate to oil refineries because of the wide variability of fuels refined, including those from low sulphur crudes and gases. Desulphurisation does, however, take place as part of the refining process in the form of suphur recovery from refinery gas streams.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much his Department has spent on office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures are not available in the form requested. I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Hercules Aircraft

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total cost and the amount of *(a)* fuel allocation in the current year for Hercules aircraft training and *(b)* fuel used and projected to be used by Hercules aircraft in Ethiopia until their withdrawal.

Mr. Lee: During the current financial year the fuel allocation for Hercules training is 35,400,000 litres. By the end of 1985 our aircraft in Ethiopia will have used some 13,000,000 litres of fuel. As to costs, it is not the practice to release such information, which is commercially confidential.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effects on Hercules aircraft training for military purposes of the use of Hercules aircraft in Ethiopia.

Mr. Lee: The deployment of the Hercules aircraft to Ethiopia has had some effect on the number if airframes and the total number of air transport flying hours available for other tasks. The effect on training in the circumstances has been considered acceptable.

Military Service

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give an estimate of the proportion of the population that has done any form of military service or training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. Details of current strengths of regular, reserve and cadet forces are given in volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, tables 4.2 to 4.6.

Salisbury Plain

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has any plans to extend its use of land on Salisbury plain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There is a shortage of training land and our policy is to extend existing training areas when suitable land is offered for sale. We have recently acquired some 339 acres of land on Salisbury plain and are considering the acquisition of a further 114 acres.

Land Acquisition (Stainmore)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has any plans to acquire land in the Stainmore area of north Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence wishes to acquire 802 acres for dry training, ie without live firing. Eden district council has objected formally to the notice of proposed change of use, and we therefore expect to refer the matter to the Department of the Environment under the provisions of DOE circular 18/84, which covers development by Government Departments.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will state the specific criteria he intends to apply in deciding whether applicants, companies or consortia seeking to manage a dockyard are British companies;

(2) if he will make it his policy when seeking competitive tenders to manage the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth to consider only companies where 90 per cent. or more of the shares are held by United Kingdom based individuals and institutions, or consortia where the constituent parties' shareholdings are so held; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In his statement on 17 April at col. 261 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said that the dockyards would remain under British control after the introduction of commercial management. The land and fixed assets will remain in the ownership of the Crown. Any particular safeguards in connection with the dockyard undertaking, which might be included in the contract, are the subject of continuing study within my Department.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the numbers who will be made redundant at *(a)* Rosyth and *(b)* Plymouth in advance of a transfer of responsibility to a private operation, beyond those already announced in April.

Mr. Lee: There has been no change to the plans announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 17 April at col. 261 for a range of efficiency measures involving job reductions of about 2,000 at Devonport dockyard and 400 at Rosyth dockyard.

It remains the Government's hope that the reductions will be achieved to the greatest extent possible through natural wastage and voluntary methods. At Rosyth dockyard it is anticipated that all the job reductions will be achieved through natural wastage.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average redundancy payment to dockyard workers paid in 1984-85 and 1985-86 to date.

Mr. Lee: These figures are not held centrally and could only be calculated at disproportionate cost. As an example, however, a dockyard craftsman aged 50 with 32 years service would be entitled to between £12,600 and £16,700 in redundancy payments. A non-craft worker (Pay Band 8) of similar age and with similar service would be entitled to between £10,500 and £14,000. These sums would obviously be less for younger employees or for those with fewer years of service.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy for voluntary redundancies at Rosyth dockyard and in the light of the dismissal notices recently sent to 36 engineering apprentices.

Mr. Lee: It remains the Government's hope that the job reductions at Rosyth dockyard will be achieved through

natural wastage and voluntary redundancy. Following an agreement between management and trades unions on a flexible approach to the deployment of the apprentices in skilled jobs throughout Rosyth dockyard, the 36 mechanical fitters referred to in the question who completed their training this summer were offered permanent employment in the Dockyard.

Defence Industries

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to maintain employment in the defence industries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Employment levels in the defence industries depend on the success of individual firms in winning orders for the MOD and overseas customers.

Multi-launch Rocket System

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Defence what is the latest position regarding production of the multi-launch rocket system project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The situation remains broadly as described in the reply of my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler) on 22 May at columns *424-5*. We expect that the intergovernmental memorandum of understanding for European production of MLRS phase I will be signed in November. Meanwhile, negotiations are continuing, with the aim of Germany, the pilot nation, awarding a production contract on behalf of the European partners by the end of the year.

Land-Air Operations

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the relationship between recent changes in British and Allied operational style initiated by the Commander in Chief, Northern Army Group, General Bagnell, and the United States Army airland battle doctrine;

(2) what is the relationship between the changes in style of operations of British and Allied forces recently initiated by the Commander in Chief, Northern Army Group, General Bagnell and the follow on force attack strategy.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Lady to the replies I gave her on 30 November 1984 at columns *595-6*.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the extent to which the changes in style of operations of British and Allied forces initiated by the Commander in Chief, Northern Army Group, General Bagnell, have been implemented along the lines indicated in General Bagnell's article in the September 1984 edition of the Royal United Services Institute *Journal*, relating to concepts of land-air operations in the central region.

Mr. Stanley: British Forces Germany are deployed in support of the agreed NATO strategy of flexible response and forward defence. Within that overall strategy, a revised concept of operations for NATO's nothern army group has now been agreed, which places increased emphasis on the selection and defence of vital areas, tactical flexibibity, the employment of reserve formations and co-operation between ground and air forces.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the use of nuclear weapons in space as a component of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The United Kingdom is a party to the partial test ban treaty, which prohibits nuclear explosions in space, and the outer space treaty of 1967, which prohibits the stationing in space of nuclear weapons; so is the United States. The United States has stated that the strategic defence initiative research programme is being conducted in a manner fully consistent with existing United States treaty commitments.

HMS Antrim

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the price and terms of the deal for which the Admiralante Cochrane, formerly HMS Antrim, was sold to Chile.

Mr. Lee: It has not been the practice of this Government or previous Administrations to reveal details of individual sales.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Until the introduction of the property repayment services arrangements on 1 April 1983 all Civil Estate expenditure of this kind was funded by the Property Services Agency. In the case of Ministry of Defence headquarters buildings expenditure on furniture and furnishings which has been met from Defence Votes in the last two financial years is as follows:

	£
1983-84	2,619,000
1984-85	3,411,000

The Property Services Agency does not differentiate in its charges between internal decoration and other forms of maintenance.

TRANSPORT

Road Safety

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will summarise his response to the Transport Committee's road safety report and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government believe that the Committee's report provides a valuable analysis and range of suggestions for improving road safety. They agree that, despite a significant drop in the number and severity of casualties in recent years, there is still scope for further reductions. They share the Committee's view that the wider application of low cost engineering measures; an effective programme of education, training and publicity; and the further development of vehicle safety measures can all make a major contribution to the prevention of

accidents or reduction in their severity. Continued research, particularly into road user bahaviour, is also needed to highlight the behavioural aspects of accident causation.

The Government's response considers each of the 43 detailed recommendations in turn. It is in general agreement with a large number of them, while others will be carefully studied in the context of the Government's own current review of road safety policy. The Government have, however, rejected the Committee's recommendations that the length of the driving test should be increased, that the motorway speed limit should be increased to 80 mph for a trial period, and that the scope of the MOT test should be extended.

The Government's full response is available in the Library.

Manchester-Blackpool Rail Link

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met representatives from Lancashire county council and Greater Manchester council to consider their proposals for electrification of the Manchester to Blackpool line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 28 June I agreed to a meeting with representatives of Lancashire and Greater Manchester councils but suggested that my Department should first receive a written statement about the wider benefits of the scheme. A meeting with officials took place on 18 July, at which the county councils agreed to supply further information. This information was received by my Department on 14 October, and I now expect to meet representatives of the two councils shortly.

Wellan Green Railway Station

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the proposal to build a new railway station at Wellan green; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am not aware of any reason to raise this issue with the chairman at the moment; I understand that British Rail (Eastern Region) has applied to Hertfordshire county council for planning permission to build a new station at Wellan Green.

Transport Spending

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of total transport spending by local authorities was allocated to *(a)* public transport and *(b)* roads in 1964, 1970 and each of the last 12 years.

Mr. Ridley: This information is only available for 1973-74 onwards. The proportions of gross expenditure are:

	Public transport	*Roads*
1973-74	29	71
1974-75	44	56
1975-76	46	54
1976-77	48	52
1977-78	51	49
1978-79	49	51
1979-80	48	52
1980-81	48	52
1981-82	49	51
1982-83	49	51
1983-84	49	51
1984-85	48	52

These include all expenditure by local authority owned public transport undertakings and car-parks, a large proportion of which is financed by revenue from fares and charges. The proportions of expenditure net of fare-box revenue and parking charges are:

	Public transport	*Roads*
1973-74	20	80
1974-75	31	69
1975-76	35	65
1976-77	36	64
1977-78	36	64
1978-79	36	64
1979-80	36	64
1980-81	36	64
1981-82	38	62
1982-83	40	60
1983-84	40	60
1984-85	39	61

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of transport spending was used on *(a)* public transport and *(b)* roads in each local authority area for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ridley: Figures for total spending on transport, which include that by the central Government and British Rail (and consumer spending), are not available for each local authority area.

British Rail (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are currently employed by British Rail in Wales and what has been the figure for each of the past five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that British Rail does not maintain a separate record of the number of staff employed in Wales.

Road Planning

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has for extending the dual cariageway for the M3-A303 from Thruxton to Exeter and on what dates these plans are to be finalised.

Mrs. Chalker: Our report "National Roads England 1985", published last June, gives details of the proposed improvements on the A303-A30 between Thruxton and Exeter, together with their approximate start dates. The details are as follows:

	Approximate Start Date
A303 Thruxton-Amesbury	Spring 1986
A303 Furze hedge improvement	Spring 1986
A303 Mere-Wincanton	April 1987-March 1989
A303 Sparkford bypass	April 1987-March 1989
A303 Ilchester-South Petherton	April 1987-March 1989
A303 South Petherton-Broadway (Ilminster bypass)	Summer 1986

	Approximate Start Date
A303-A30 Marsh-Honiton improvement	April 1989 onwards
A30 Honiton-Exeter improvement	April 1989 onwards

Dual carriageways will be provided wherever this is justified by present and predicted traffic usage.

Studies are in hand to determine what needs to be done to the remaining sections of the route between these planned improvements.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: Prior to 1983-84 Departments were not charged separately for office furniture, curtains and carpets, nor for maintenance work undertaken by PSA on their estates.

For 1983-84 and 1984-85 the information for my Department is as follows:

	Supplies items	Office decoration
	£	£
1983-84	*718,529	†
1984-85	*1,499,675	†

Notes:

*Expenditure on supplies, which includes office furniture, curtains and carpets, is not separately itemised.

†It is not possible to separate the cost of office decoration from other maintenance work.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what implications does the development proposal for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone have for the docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the consortium which has expressed interest in the development of the Canary wharf site has proposed an extension of the Docklands light railway to the Bank which would be financed by private capital. It is too early to know whether this proposition will proceed or to make an assessment of its implications for the Docklands light railway.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations his Department has held in relation to the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephones

Mr. Skinner asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the number of new telephones installed throughout the Houses of Parliament and adjoining parliamentary office buildings.

Mr. Biffen: 3,141.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he has now determined the role of community programme work on football league grounds following the publication of the interim report from Mr. Justice Popplewell, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Discussions are currently taking place between officials of my Department and those of the Department of the Environment and the Manpower Services Commission to identify areas where the community programme might usefully have a role. Any proposal would need to be discussed with the appropriate football bodies.

Gas Safety

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many prosecutions for contraventions of the gas safety regulations have been undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark Five prosecutions for contraventions of the gas safety regulations had been taken by the Health and Safety Executive up to 10 October 1985.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Pendry asked the Paymaster General what was the number of men and women aged under 25 years registered as unemployed in Stalybridge and Hyde at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, there were 1,389 male and 774 female unemployed claimants under 25 years of age in the parliamentary constituency of Stalybridge and Hyde.

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General if the definition of productivity in use in his Department makes any distinction between a firm achieving higher output with an unchanged labour force and a firm maintaining output with a reduced labour force and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The national estimates of productivity are made using the most suitable information available on output and employment. The data for each component is to a large extent collected separately and estimates are prepared independently. It is therefore not possible to provide national estimates of productivity which distinguish between those improvements for firms which arise entirely from increases in output and those which have come about solely because of reductions in labour.

The employed labour force is estimated to have increased by nearly 3 per cent. between the first quarter of 1983 and the second quarter of 1985; at the same time output rose by 8 per cent. and hence productivity for the whole economy increased by 5 per cent.

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General which industrial sectors have lost *(a)* more than 30 per cent. and *(b)* more than 20 per cent., respectively, of total numbers employed in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following tables list those industries in Great Britain which have shown the specified net decreases in numbers of employees in employment between June 1979 (figures are not available for May) and June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available.

Table 1

Industries in which there has been a net decrease in employees in employment of more than 30 per cent. between June 1979 and June 1985 (1980 Standard Industrial Classification)

Metal manufacturing (class 22)
Production of man-made fibres (class 26)
Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts thereof (class 35)
Textile industry (class 43)
Manufacture of leather and leather goods (class 44)
Footwear and clothing industries (class 45)
Other manufacturing industries (class 49)
Sea transport (class 74)

Table 2

Industries in which there has been a net decrease in employees in employment of more than 20 per cent. between June 1979 and June 1985 (1980 Standard Industrial Classification)*

Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels (class 11)
Mineral oil processing (class 14)
Manufacture of non-metallic mineral products (class 24)
Manufacture of metal goods not elsewhere specified (class 31)
Mechanical engineering (class 32)
Manufacture of other transport equipment (class 36)
Processing of rubber and plastics (class 48)
Construction (class 50)
Air transport (class 75)
Supporting services to transport (class 76)

* Additional to those in table 1.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many persons were registered as unemployed, or in receipt of unemployment benefit, in each of his Department's offices in Greater London in May 1979 and the most recent convenient date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is available in the library. I am sending a copy of a computer print showing the requested information for registered unemployed at jobcentres at May 1979, for unemployed claimants in each jobcentre area at August 1985, and for October 1982 on both bases. Comparisons are affected by the change in the basis of the unemployment count in October 1982, and by the 1983 Budget provisions which meant that some men, mainly aged 60 years and over, no longer needed to sign on in order to receive supplementary benefit or national insurance credits.

Unemployment statistics are no longer produced for jobcentre areas, and from September 1985 are only available for areas defined in terms of local authority electoral wards.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Ashby asked the Paymaster General (1) how many claimants of unemployment benefit who were offered work which they declined and were then refused benefits for six weeks thereafter recommenced receiving benefit during 1984; and what was the average length of time for which they remained in receipt of unemployment benefit;

(2) what information he has as to how many claimants of unemployment and/or supplementary benefit who were offered work which they refused continued to receive benefit for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

In 1983, the last year for which figures are available, the independent adjudicating authorities considered 5,021 cases of unemployment benefit claimants refusing offers of apparently suitable employment (Social Security Act 1975, section 20(1)). 1,450 were disqualified and 3,571 not disqualified from receiving benefit.

Mr. Ashby asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the number of people currently claiming unemployment or supplementary benefit, or both, within the following occupational categories: farm labourers, forestry workers, artists and sculptors, performing visual and audio arts, literary occupations, construction labourers, painting and decorating and merchant seamen as deckworkers and as engineers.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information about the occupations of unemployed benefit claimants is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashby asked the Paymaster General how many current claimants of unemployment or supplementary benefit, or both, are not registered at a jobcentre.

Mr. Alan Clarke: This information is not available. While statistics of those registered at jobcentres are available, it is not known how many are claimants of unemployment or supplementary benefit. Those registered at jobcentres also include people seeking a change of employment, and unemployed people not claiming benefit. Also many jobseekers make use of the self service facilities at jobcentres but do not register.

New Businesses

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General (1) what has been the net increase in the numbers of self-employed in both Amber Valley and Derbyshire since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981;

(2) what has been the total change in the number of self-employed in both Amber Valley and Derbyshire since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981.

Mr. Allan Clark: Information at the level of detail requested is only available from the census of population. Between census years, information on the number of self employed comes from sample surveys which do not provide estimates for geographical areas smaller than regions or metropolitan counties.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General (1) what has been the total increase in the number of new businesses in Amber Valley and Derbyshire since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981;

(2) what has been the net change in the number of new businesses in both Amber Valley and Derbyshire since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981.

Mr. Trippier: The number of new businesses registered in Derbyshire between the end of 1979 and the end of 1983 was 8,764. The net increase in businesses was 1,819.

Information for other dates is not readily available and nor is information in respect of Amber Valley. Information relating to business starts and stops by county was published in *British Business* on 18 January 1985 and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in the number of self-employed since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is estimated that there was an increase of 717,000 in the number of self-employed between June 1979 and June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available. The estimate for June 1985 is provisional.

Sex Discrimination

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General what policy he is adopting in response to the sex discrimination tribunal ruling against the eligibility requirements for entrants to community programme schemes.

Mr. Alan Clark: An appeal against the industrial tribunal decision in this case has been lodged with the employment appeal tribunal.

The Government will continue to direct provision at those most in need of the opportunities that the community programme provides.

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General what policy he is adopting in response to the European Economic Community sex discrimination ruling against United Kingdom retirement ages for women and men.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The European Court of Justice has not yet ruled out the question of different retirement ages for men and women. The Advocate General's opinion delivered on 18 September in the case of Marshall v S W Hampshire Area Health Authority is not the final judgment of the court. We will study the implications of the judgment when we receive it.

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General how many workers have ceased to fall within the scope of the wages councils and the Wages Inspectorate as a result of the exclusion of those between the ages of 16 and 21 years, how many of these are women, and what proportion women represent of the total number.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. It is estimated that half a million people under 21 now subject to wages council regulation will cease to be so under the Government's proposed reforms. Approximately 350,000 of these are female, representing about two-thirds of the total workforce under 21 within scope of wages councils.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how much the Department of Employment has spent on *(a)* office furniture, *(b)* carpets and curtains and *(c)* office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No information is available to the Department prior to April 1983. For 1983-84 and 1984-85 expenditure with the Crown Suppliers in respect of all furniture and office supplies was £5·1 million and £4·6 million respectively. The bulk of the expenditure on office decorating is met by the Property Services Agency and details of the amount spent on Department of Employment accommodation is not available excpet at disproportionate cost.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General when, and to what level, he intends to raise the allowance paid to trainees on the youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The allowance for trainees on the youth training scheme was increased on 1 September this year to £27.30 per week, and this will be the rate for first year trainees after the introduction of our new two-year scheme in April next year; the allowance for trainees in their second year will be £35 per week.

Wages Councils

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General how many prosecutions there have been over the last six years against employers in the west midlands who have broken wages councils' agreements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One employer in the west midlands division of the wages inspectorate has been successfully prosecuted for an offence under wages council legislation since 1979.

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General how many inspectors are employed to enforce wages councils' agreements in the west midlands.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Eleven wages inspectors are employed in the west midlands division of the wages inspectorate.

Employment (Discrimination)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General what steps the Government is taking to combat discrimination against lesbians and homosexual men in employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Violent Crime

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest figures available for the incidence of violent crime, giving the percentage increase in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Information relating to crime and criminal proceedings is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Table 2.1 in the latest volume, Cmnd. 9621, gives the percentage annual increase in the number of violent and other offences recorded in the period 1974 to 1984. The figures show that in the last five years violent crime has continued to increase, though the increase has been less marked than in the preceding five years.

Rape Victims

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of the Metropolitan police with regard to the practice of ensuring that alleged rape victims obtain priority appointments with venereal disease clinics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police have made arrangements with the agreement of the appropriate health authorities, with a number of hospitals with specialist clinics to enable victims of rape and other serious sexual

assaults to receive priority appointments if they so wish. It is the police's policy to offer such appointments to all victims of serious sexual assaults.

Prevention of Terrorism

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is given to individuals held at ports of entry for examination under article 4(1) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Supplemental Temporary Provisions) Order 1984, about their rights to *(a)* see a lawyer, *(b)* have a reasonable named person informed of their whereabouts and *(c)* silence.

Mr. Waddington: Article 4(1) relates to those examined, as they pass through ports. In the vast majority of such cases, the examination takes no more than a minute or two and no special notice on the matters referred to is given. Those few for whom the initial process of examination takes longer than one hour are given a notice of rights under section 62 of the Criminal Law Act 1977. Persons formally detained under article 9 for further examination under article 4(2) are given the same notice of rights as a person held in police custody under any other legislation. The form of information given in either case will be reviewed to comply with the provision of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training and instructions have been given to immigration and customs personnel concerning the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 in relation to international terrorism.

Mr. Waddington: The enforcement of the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 is principally for the police. As part of their training Immigration Officers (and customs officers employed as immigration officers under the Immigration Act 1971) are made aware of their powers of examination under the 1984 Act have have instructions to bring to the attention of the police any matter which might involve international terrorism.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals have been successfully contacted since 1974 in connection with the three yearly reviews of exclusion orders under the Prevention of Terrorism Act; in how many cases personal interviews have been carried out; what is the criteria for deciding whether a personal interview should be offered; and whether the information taken into account by the Secretary of State in connection with a review is always related to the three years immediately before the review.

Mr. Hurd: Ninety-five persons against whom exclusion orders were made before the passing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 have responded to invitations to have their cases reviewed under the 3-year procedure, which has been in operation since 1979. It is for the police, who provide me with up-to-date reports on each case, to decide whether or not they wish to interview a review applicant. Fifty-five persons have been invited to attend such an interview and 45 have in fact attended. My decision in any case is based on all the relevant information available to me, although particular attention is paid to information, or lack of it, about involvement in terrorism within the last three years. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has his own procedures for reviewing exclusion orders that he or his predecessors have made.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the recommended text of the notice of prisoners' rights given to individuals in police custody and a copy of the recommended text given to individuals held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Hurd: A copy of the notice to prisoners has been placed in the Library. Persons detained under the prevention of terrorism legislation are given the same notice as persons detained under other legislation.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place a copy of the report of the Home Office working group on port units, issued in February 1985 by the Inspectorate of Constabularies, in the Library; and what measures are being considered in the light of the report with regard to passenger control and examination or detention of travellers under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Hurd: The report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary on the work of the police in operating port controls under the prevention of terrorism legislation deals with security arrangements and is not suitable for publication. In the light of its conclusions on the use made of landing and embarkation cards my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary has decided that a selective use of the cards is to be preferred. Other recommendations are still being considered.

Alcoholic Liquor Licences

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received advocating a relaxation in the standards required of persons applying for a licence to retail alcoholic liquor, particularly with regard to off-licence holders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. The licensing justices must be satisfied that an applicant for a liquor licence is a fit and proper person to hold a licence, and we have no plans to relax that requirement.

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department issues guidelines to licensing magistrates regarding the criteria for the granting of on and off licences for the sale of alcoholic beverages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No such guidelines are issued, nor would they be appropriate; subject to the matters on which the law requires the justices to be satisfied, the grant of an on or off licence is wholly within their discretion.

Alcohol (Retail Sales)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received advocating legislation to impose stricter controls over the supply of alcohol by large chain stores and supermarkets and the methods and means by which alcoholic beverages are displayed and marketed by such outlets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations in recent months and has no present plans to amend the licensing law on the lines described.

Council of Europe Convention on Pet Animals

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Council of Europe convention on pet animals.

Mr. Mellor: The Government welcome the continuing work in the Council of Europe on issues of animal welfare in general; they are maintaining a close interest in the current preparation of a draft convention for the protection of pet animals.

Litter

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought in each of the last five years for the offence of dropping litter in *(a)* England and Wales, and *(b)*Basildon.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me on proceedings in magistrates' courts in England and Wales for offences under the Litter Acts, which may be incomplete, is published annually in Table S.1.1(a)(iii) of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Vol. 1." Data are not collected centrally for Basildon alone, but for the whole of the Billericay petty sessional division where 5 prosecutions were recorded in 1981, 3 in 1982, 2 in 1983 and 5 in 1984.

Animals (Illegal Imports)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people smuggling animals into the United Kingdom were stopped at ports of entry and charged in each of the past five years and in the current year to date;

(2) in respect of people stopped whilst illegally bringing animals into the United Kingdom, how many animals in each of the past five years were found to be suffering from diseases.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, relates to the results of court proceedings in England and Wales for offences against the Animal Health Act 1981 (which replaced the Diseases of Animals Act 1950 in July 1981) and against the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974. The former is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 1" (Table A1.1(A) under offence classification 110); the latter is shown in the table below.

However, I understand from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who has responsibility for the health aspect of the importation of animals (including birds) into the United Kingdom under the Animal Health Act 1981, that the number of prosecutions taken under this Act for offences of illegal landings at ports of entry during each of the years 1980 to 1984 were, respectively, 96, 90, 96, 132 and 82 and that none of the animals landed illegally under the Animal Health Act 1981 (which may be directed to quarantine, re-exported or destroyed) and directed to quarantine were found to be infected with diseases for which his Department would invoke powers of destruction.

Following is the information:

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts in England and Wales for offences against the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974

Year	*Number of defendants*
1980	6
1981	4
1982	9
1983	8
1984	10

Murder Statistics

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the number of convictions for murder of persons under the age of 15 years in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of offences of homicide of those aged under 16 years is published for the last 11 years in table 4.6 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1984" (Cmnd. 9621). For victims aged under 15, the number of such offences is related to the number of convictions for murder in the table below which gives figures from 1982; provision of corresponding details for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

Offences currently recorded as homicide and outcome of proceedings for suspects of victims aged under 15*
England and Wales

Year	*Number of victims*	*Total suspects*	*Outcome of proceedings for suspects*							
			Total	*Convicted of homicide*			*Infanticide*	*Not convicted† of homicide*	*Not indicted‡*	*Awaiting trial*
				Murder	*Section 2 manslaughter*	*Other manslaughter*				
1982	77	64	50	8	19	17	6	—	14	—
1983	68	64	57	12	10	25	10	1	6	—
1984	82	69	38	6	12	18	2	2	14	15

* As at 1 June 1985.
† Unfit to plead, not guilty by reason of insanity, acquitted.
‡ Suicide, no proceedings, eg on advice of DPP.

Offences Against Young Persons

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the number of convictions for sexual and other violent offences by adults against persons under the age of 15 years in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is brought together in the following table. For other types of offences of violence and sexual offences the information collected centrally does not distinguish the age of the victim. Information on those offences marked with an asterisk is published annually in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 4" (Tables S 4.1(A) and S 4.1(B) for 1984) which also includes information on cautions for these offences. (Tables S 4.1(C) and S 4.1(D)).

Following is the table:

Offenders aged 17 and over found guilty at all courts in England and Wales of certain violence against the person or sexul offences where the victim is known to be or could be aged 16 or under

Number of persons

Offence	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Indictable offences						
Murder of infants under 1 year of age	1	—	—	—	1	—
Infanticide	7	7	9	3	8	6
Cruelty to or neglect of children	138	147	101	101	87	102
Abandoning child under 2 years*	1	2	1	1	2	1
Child stealing*	13	10	8	7	19	10
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	119	140	143	123	142	113
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	17	14	9	5	12	21
Indecent assault on a male person under 16 years	485	498	458	460	482	460
Indecent assault on a female person under 16 years of age	1,347	1,345	1,146	1,167	1,086	1,068
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13*	77	94	69	59	92	72
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16*	620	525	454	388	393	393
Incest with a girl under 13	49	50	32	44	38	48
Inciting girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse	8	6	3	6	7	—
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16	6	5	7	7	3	6
Person responsible for girl under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc.	3	3	4	3	4	3
Abduction of unamarried girl under 16	19	11	8	9	6	8
Gross indecency with children*	239	238	209	205	205	226
Summary offence						
Cruelty to or neglect of children*	4	4	5	10	1	1

Fighting Dogs

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to ban the importation of fighting dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. We do not consider that such a ban would be effective in preventing illegal fighting, given the number of dogs already in the United Kingdom which are susceptible to such abuse, and the difficulty of distinguishing between dogs bred for fighting and those intended as pets.

Police Officers (Code of Conduct)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has advised chief constables to adopt the code of conduct for police officers as advocated and published by Sir Kenneth Newman, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis sent copies of the handbook of "The Principles of Policing and Guidance for Professional Behaviour" to all other forces when it was published on 2 April. It is for chief constables to decide whether or not to use it in their own forces. The then Home Secretary made clear his high regard for the handbook, during the debate on the policing of the metropolis on 28 June; that view is shared by his successor.

Metropolitan Police (Ethnic Membership)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the Metropolitan police stationed in J district are from the ethnic minorities; and what are their ranks.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 11 October there were nine officers from ethnic minorities serving in 'J' District: two sergeants and seven constables.

Dog Fights

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an inquiry into the incidence of dog fights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The organised fighting of animals is illegal under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. The investigation of these offences is not the direct responsibility of the Department, but my right hon. Friend is aware of a number recent cases in which successful prosecutions have been brought. We have no present plans for an inquiry, but we are keeping the matter under review.

Racial Attacks

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations were made to him on 26 September by the high commissioner of Bangladesh and the ambassador of Pakistan regarding racial attacks; what reply he gave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The ambassador and the high commissioner expressed concern at recent incidents which

had raised questions about the safety in this country of people of Asian origin. The persistence of apparently racially motivated attacks on Asians, and the loss of Asian life and property during the disturbances of Handsworth, were issues of particular anxiety. The deputation handed to my right hon. Friend a dossier on 70 racial attacks which had occurred since the beginning of 1984 about which he has sought advice from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the chief constables in whose areas the attacks took place.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that he shared their concern; he expressed his abhorrence at the injury and distress which these incidents cause; and he explained that the problem of racial attacks was high on the agenda of the Association of Chief Police Officers and that the issue would be discussed at the meeting of the Advisory Council on Race Relations on 1 October. My right hon. Friend also emphasised the Government's determination to ensure that everyone for whom the United Kingdom was now their home should have the fundamental right to live peacefully free from attack or harassment.

Scarman Report

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state which of the recommendations of the Scarman report which he did not accept or implement he is now re-considering in the light of recent events in inner-city areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The police have re-examined almost every area of their activities in the light of Lord Scarman's report. All of his recommendations on policing have been implemented, half of them in full, and the rest in different degrees depending on resources, further consultation and action still being taken. The Government also continue to attach high priority to relieving the social needs of the inner cities.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the addresses and telephone numbers of all the offices of the Commission for Racial Equality in Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The Commission for Racial Equality has no offices in Wales.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the members of the Commission for Racial Equality, together with the date of their appointments and the duration of their period of office, indicating which were appointed as having a particular knowledge of circumstances in Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The present membership of the Commission for Racial Equality is as follows:

	Date of original appointment	*Date of expiry of appointment*
Mr. Peter Newsam (Chairman)	1 September 1982	31 August 1987
Mr. Clifton Robinson, CBE JP (Deputy Chairman)	28 April 1977	31 October 1985
Mr. Lincoln Crawford	1 May 1984	30 April 1986
Mrs. Shreela Flather JP	29 April 1980	30 April 86
Mr. Alan Gayton JP	1 May 1982	30 April 1986
Mr. Kenneth Gill	16 February 1981	30 April 1987
Dr. Farrukh Hashmi, OBE, MP BS, DPM, FRC, Psych	29 April 1980	30 April 1986
Miss Ethel Houston, OBE, LLB, MA	1 May 1984	30 April 1986
Mr. E. Gilmour Jones	1 May 1984	30 April 1986
Mrs. Lily Khan	1 May 1984	30 April 1986
Mr. William Morris	28 April 1984	30 April 1987
Professor Bhiku Parekh	1 May 1984	30 April 1986
Mr. Gurcharan Singh Sarang	1 May 1984	30 April 1986
Mr. Gerald Tyler	1 May 1982	30 April 1986
Mr. Keith Whitesides, JP, M Phil, LLB	1 June 1984	31 May 1986

Commissioners are chosen for their personal qualities and for their general knowledge and experience of the areas covered by race relations legislation. Mrs. Flather is the commissioner with special responsibility for the commission's affairs in Wales.

Metropolitan Police (Equipment)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policy he is adopting towards requests to equip women and men serving in the Metropolitan police force with martial arts batons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a number of new truncheons have been evaluated by the force but that none as yet has been selected as suitable for operational use. The Home Secretary's agreement to the issue of a new truncheon has therefore not been sought.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the special equipment for riot control currently available to the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The special equipment currently available to the Metropolitan police consists of long shields, round shields, NATO helmets, flame-proof overalls, protective grilles for vehicles, and CS smoke and baton rounds.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new equipment for riot control is currently being evaluated by the Metropolitan police force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police are considering a radio communications link for helmets, tape-recorders in helmets (for evidence-gathering), personal kit bags for riot equipment, breastplates for women officers, shin protectors, protective boots, first aid packs and long batons.

Women (Prosecutions)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women have been prosecuted for *(a)* social security fraud, *(b)* non-payment of debt and *(c)* non-payment of fines imposed on sentencing for these offences; of these how many in each category have received custodial sentences; what proportion women represent of the total number of prosecutions in each category; and what proportion custodial sentences on women represent in each of the above categories, in each case for each of the latest available three years.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 1", (in Table S1.1(A) under offence classification 151). To obtain information on persons received into prison for defaulting on a payment of a fine imposed for a social security offence would involve disproportionate cost.

Drug Offences

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of those persons in Wales convicted of *(a)* all drug-related offences and *(b)* offences related to the use of heroin or its derivatives, how many were unemployed for each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police (CS Gas and Plastic Bullets)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training procedures are currently undertaken by the Metropolitan police in the use of CS gas and plastic bullets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The training is designed to ensure that officers are familiar with the guidelines on the use of CS and baton rounds and with the technical characteristics of the approved equipment. They regularly undertake refresher training.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many and which occasions in the last 12 months CS gas and plastic bullets have been drawn for use by the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis gave authority for the operational use of plastic baton rounds in Tottenham on 6 October, but they were not used. This is the only occasion to date on which such authority has been given in Great Britain. Authority for the operational use of CS gas for public order purposes has never yet been given in the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he was consulted before the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis placed Londoners on notice that he would not hesitate to use CS gas and plastic bullets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend was informed that the commissioner had given authority for CS and baton rounds to be used in Tottenham on 6 October, in accordance with the guidelines issued in September 1981. He was consulted and gave his support to the Commissioner in making it clear the following day that CS or baton rounds may have to be used as a last resort, when conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or are unlikely to succeed if tried, and when such action is necessary because of the risk of loss of life or serious injury or widespread destruction of property.

Metropolitan Police (Troop Support)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any plans exist for the deployment of troops in support of the Metropolitan police during civilian disorders.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Water Cannon (Crowd Control)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any discussions have taken place with the London fire brigade on the use of water cannon for crowd control.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if consideration is being given to the use of water cannon for riot control.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes, although the disadvantages are well known, and it is not thought that they would have been of any use in the Tottenham riot.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent on *(a)* office furniture, *(b)* carpets and curtains and *(c)* office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hurd: Before 1 April 1983, the Department's office accommodation was provided as an allied service and the costs were borne by the Property Services Agency (PSA) of the Department of the Environment. Almost all decorating continues to be arranged by the PSA as part of its responsibility for maintaining the civil estate. Departments fund the PSA for this and other works services by the payment of an annual accommodation charge for each of its occupations; decorating costs are not separately identified.

The amounts spent by the Department in 1983-84 and 1984-85 on office furniture, carpets and curtains (and other associated services such as porterage) were £699,341 and £1,509,815 respectively. A further breakdown of these figures could not be provided except at disproportionate cost. These figures do not include the offices element of expenditure at prisons and other specialised Home Office outstations, separate information about which is not readily available.

Metropolitan Police (Firearms Injuries)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Office how many Metropolitan police officers have suffered injury from the use of firearms in each of the past six years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is as follows:

	Injured	*Killed*
1979	2	0
1980	5	0
1981	5	0
1982	0	0
1983	5	0
1984	6	1
Total	23	1

Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilians have received injuries from firearms used by the Metropolitan police in each of the last six years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information required is as follows:

	Number
1980	2
1981	1
1982	3
1983	1
1984	3
1985—to date	2
Total	12

None of the injuries was fatal.

Metropolitan Police (Firearms Training)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers are currently trained in the use of firearms; and what was the figure for each of the past six years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of officers whose training is maintained at a level allowing them to be armed varies during each year. The available information, recording the number of qualified officers at a particular date each year, is as follows:

	Number
December 1980	4,133
December 1981	4,181
October 1982	4,476
March 1983	4,667
October 1984	4,631
April 1985	4,631
September 1985	3,973

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to visit Liverpool to meet ethnic community leaders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Toxteth (Disturbances)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent civil disturbances in Toxteth, Liverpool.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Merseyside that during the afternoon of 1 October four men appeared at Liverpool City magistrates' court charged with offences of affray following incidents at the Toxteth carnival on 10 August. They were remanded in custody at Risley remand centre. The public gallery was packed. After the proceedings had been completed, a hammer was thrown through the window of Hope street police station. The crowd dispersed in the direction of Toxteth and there followed sporadic outbreaks of disorder all confined within a triangle of 300 yards. A small number of vehicles were commandeered and set on fire and the police were stoned. Up to 400 youths were involved in the violence and the police deployed a substantial number of officers in riot gear. The Bishop and Archbishop of Liverpool called a meeting at the neighbourhood law centre in an attempt to ease the tension. Sporadic incidents of disorder continued to take place in the late evening and a small fire was started at premises in Granby street. This was quickly extinguished. By 2 am there remained a hard core of around 50-100 youths throwing stones but they were eventually dispersed. Four police officers sustained injuries (one was detained in hospital) and 10 injuries to members of the public were reported. A total of 17 people have been charged with offences arising out of these incidents.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish in the *Official Report* the result of his analysis of board and lodging in all local offices.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private hospitals are operating in the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information is not collected centrally for the United Kingdom. On 31 December 1984 there were 195 private hospitals registered under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 and equipped with operating theatres in England (provisional figure) and 5 in Wales.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any information on the numbers of persons who have died following operations in private hospitals in 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: Records of deaths in 1984 occurring in non-NHS institutions have been examined and, excluding those occurring in military hospitals, there were 31 deaths where therapeutic misadventure had been coded and an operation recorded. In addition there were a further 178 deaths, where operation had been recorded on the certificate as well as other specified causes of death. It is not possible, from the information available, to determine whether the operation was carried out at the institute in which the patient died.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will instruct Coopers and Lybrand to undertake widespread consultation with interested bodies in the course of producing its report on competitive tendering.

Mr. Hayhoe: It has done so.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the specific terms of reference applying to the report his Department has commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand on competitive tendering.

Mr. Hayhoe: The terms of reference for the report commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand were as follows:

(a) To identify different systems of catering which are available for feeding patients and staff in National Health service hospitals;

(b) To give general advice on the circumstances in which the various systems might be applicable (but not to carry out a detailed technical study);

(c) To identify those systems which are likely to require capital expenditure for buildings or equipment;
(d) To set out the options available to be tested by competitive tendering taking into account the various systems;
(e) To advise on how those options should be set out in invitations to tender;
(f) To advise on which options might justify extension of the contract period beyond the normal three years.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated total cost of the report his Department has commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand on competitive tendering.

Mr. Hayhoe: The estimated total cost of its study is £32,000.

Health Authorities (Catering Services)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to issue guidelines to health authorities on the contracting out of catering services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: We are currently considering proposals which will form the basis of additional guidance for health authorities. This will include the report prepared by Coopers and Lybrand on catering services—competitive tendering.

NHS (Catering)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list all research studies available to him on National Health Service catering;

(2) what study his Department has made, or has available to it, on the efficiency of National Health Service catering.

Mr. Hayhoe: There is a large amount of information available on various aspects of National Health Service catering, including efficiency, much of which is distributed to health authorities by the Department in Health Service catering bulletins. In addition the following studies have been separately identified:

Hospital Meal Survey—A joint DHSS/Leeds University study. 1979.

Energy Conservation in Kitchens — A joint DHSS/NHS investigation into energy losses in hospital service departments. July 1982.

Procurement of Breakfast Cereals—Health Service Supply Council Paper. October 1984.

Scrutiny Report into Cost of NHS Catering—Issued February 1985.

Hospital Building Note No. 10—DHSS publication providing guidance for designing and equipping Health Service Catering Departments. May 1985.

Report on Food Procurement — Health Service Supply Council. 1985.

Research Study: Meat and Meat Products in the NHS—Conducted by the Health Service Supply Council and issued in August 1985.

Health Authorities (Private Laundries)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the numbers of health authorities which did not use private laundries in the years 1983 and 1984;

(2) what information he has concerning health authorities which have taken back in-house laundry work previously carried out by private contractors, as referred to in the Sixth Report of the Social Services Committee on public expenditure and social services.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is not collected centrally in the way requested. However, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Health to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 21 February at columns *590-98*.

Gas Poisoning

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children *(a)* under the age of 15 years and *(b)* between the ages of 15 and 21 years died from gas poisoning in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of children under the age of 15 years and aged 15 to 21 years who died from the toxic effect of carbon monoxide and other gases, fumes or vapours in 1982, 1983 and 1984 are shown in the table.

ICD (9) 986-987 England and Wales*

Year	*Age in years*	
	0-14	*15-21*
1982	79	73
1983	79	72
1984	90	81

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision).

Fire Deaths

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons over 65 years of age died in fires *(a)* at home and *(b)* in residential institutions in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the numbers of deaths from accidents caused by fire and flames *(a)* at home and *(b)* in residential institutions, of persons aged 65 and over, which were registered in England and Wales in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

ICD (9) E890-E899*

Year	*Place of accident*	
	At home	*Residential institutions*
1982	345	17
1983	310	9
1984	315	11

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision).

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children under 15 years of age died in fires at home in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the numbers of deaths from accidents caused by fire and flames at home, of children under 15 years of age, which were registered in England and Wales in 1982, 1983 and 1984

ICD (9) E890-899*

Year	*Age in years*
	0-14
1982	74
1983	92
1984	81

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision).

Drownings

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of deaths from drowning in the following age groups in 1984: *(a)* under five years, *(b)* five to 14 years, *(c)* 15 to 25 years, *(d)* 25 to 40 years, *(e)* 40 to 55 years, *(f)* 55 to 65 years, *(g)* 65 to 75 years and *(h)* over 75 years.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table.

Deaths from Drowning in England and Wales. 1984 (ICD (9) Code 994.1)*

Age groups (in years)	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
All	582	389	971
0-4	30	9	39
5-14	28	5	33
15-24	89	14	103
25-39	100	38	138
40-54	118	61	179
55-64	90	89	179
65-74	75	97	172
75 and over	52	76	128

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision)

McColl Committee Report

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he received the McColl committee report on artificial limbs and appliances; when he intends to make the report public; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if it is his intention to implement immediately the recommendations of the McColl committee on artificial limbs and appliances; if he will be having discussions with relevant organisations about the implications of the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the working party under the chairmanship of Professor Ian McColl into the artificial limbs and appliance centres was appointed; when its report is anticipated; and how long thereafter he anticipates responding to its representations.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number and percentage of cases won by appellants appealing against refusal or stoppage of invalidity benefit claims in the past year in England and Wales and the number and percentage of such cases which were supported by *(a)* the claimant's own general practitioner, *(b)* an independent medical consultant and *(c)* other evidence.

Mr. Major: I regret that information relating to appellants in invalidity benefit cases is not available in the form requested. The latest available information for Great Britain which relates to all types of appeal in invalidity benefit cases for the year ending 31 December 1983 is that 3,280 appeals were made to local tribunals of which 947 were successful. A further 164 appeals were made to the commissioner of which 46 were upheld. Of 3,280 appellants 993 (30 per cent) were therefore successful.

I regret that no information is available regarding the number of appeal cases supported by *(a)* the claimant's own general practitioner, *(b)* an independent medical consultant and *(c)* other evidence.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of occasions in the past year on which payments of invalidity benefit to claimants have been stopped in England and Wales, respectively; and if he will give these figures as percentages of total invalidity benefit claimants.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. In the 12 months ending 2 April 1983, the latest period for which figures are available, about 250,000 spells of invalidity benefit ended in Great Britain. Spells can terminate for various reasons but the great majority will be because the claimant submitted a final doctor's statement certifying he was no longer incapable of work. As claimants may have had more than one spell of incapacity in a year it is not possible to express this figure as a percentage of the total number of invalidity benefit claimants. But in the same period some 930,000 beneficiaries received invalidity pension.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of cases where the findings of the regional medical officer conflict with those of a claimant's own general practitioner and where the findings of the adjudication officer subsequently confirm the opinion of the regional medical officer in cases where claims for invalidity benefit have been refused or stopped in England and Wales for the past year; and if he will express both numbers as percentages of the total number of claims for invalidity benefit.

Mr. Major: I regret that the requested information is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each office of his Department in mid-Glamorgan, the number of occasions in the past year on which payments of invalidity benefit to claimants have been stopped.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information is not available. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of invalidity benefit claimants at each office of his Department in mid-Glamorgan at the latest available date.

Mr. Major: Information about claimants to invalidity benefit is obtained by periodical analysis of a small sample of cases. From this analysis we estimate that on 2 April 1983 (the latest date for which figures are available), there are approximately 28,700 people receiving invalidity benefit at the Department's eight offices in mid-Glamorgan. The sample is too small to permit reliable estimates to be made of the number of claimants at any particular office.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Review Committee on drugs prescribable on the National Health Service will complete its consideration of the inclusion of Lipotriad, Lipoflavanoid, and Mucodyne on the list of prescribed drugs.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs is giving priority to the position of Mucodyne and other oral mucolytics and is considering the many representations received and I hope to receive advice from it soon. I understand it has yet to consider in detail the position of Lipotriad and Lipoflavanoid.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now consider adding mucolytics to the drugs prescribable under the National Health Service.

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs has reached a decision on the inclusion of mucolytic drugs on the selected list; and when such a decision might be announced.

Mr. Hayhoe: We are awaiting advice from the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs, which has not yet completed its consideration of oral mucolytic drugs.

Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library tables showing for each supplementary benefit office *(a)* the numbers of live cases in each of the three categories, pensioners, unemployed and others, for the most recent year for which information is available and *(b)* the number of single payments made to claimants in each of these categories by each office in the same year.

Mr. Major: Tables showing the latest available figures of claimants, in the categories of pensioners, unemployed and others, receiving supplementary benefit from each of the Department's offices were placed in the Library on 25 March in response to the hon. Member's earlier request of 5 March at column *504*. Tables showing the number of single payments made in the year ending April 1985, broken down on the same basis, were placed in the Library on 7 October.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit claimants there were in the London borough of Southwark in each of the years 1979 to 1985; and what was the number of children dependent on these claimants in each of those years.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 1 May at columns *169-70*. This reply gave the number of people claiming supplementary benefit at the nine local social security offices which serve the London borough of Southwark. The areas served by these offices are not coterminous with the borough so that some claimants living in surrounding boroughs were included in the figures given. Comparable figures for the number of dependent children are not available centrally.

The following table shows the estimated number of people claiming supplementary benefit in 1981, 1982 and 1983, and the estimated number of children dependent on them. Comparable figures for 1979, 1980, 1984 and 1985 are not available centrally.

London borough of Southwark

	Estimated number of Supplementary Benefit claimants	*Estimated number of children dependent on these claimants*
1981	24,000	11,000
1982	29,000	14,000
1983	30,000	14,000

St. Mark's Hospital, Maidenhead

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received, and from whom, with regard to the proposed closure of the accident and emergency unit at St. Mark's hospital, Maidenhead; what response he has made; how many persons are in the area currently served by the unit; what estimates have been made of the net savings arising from the closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The East Berkshire health authority is currently consulting the local community health council on its proposals for the future of St. Mark's hospital accident and emergency department. Ministers have received representations against the district health authority's proposals from eight members of the public, the Windsor and Maidenhead district association of local councils and the Royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead; and their comments have been passed to the health authority for consideration as part of the consultation exercise. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the proposal whilst local consultations are still under way.

I have asked the chairman of the East Berkshire health authority to provide my hon. Friend with the detailed information he requested.

Rhodesian Service Pensions

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of the decline in the value of the Zimbabwe dollar against the pound sterling, he will bring forward proposals for increasing the value of pensions awarded to war widows of Rhodesian service men who are British citizens having re-settled in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The United Kingdom Government may supplement a war widow's pension payable to a British citizen resident in this country by the government of a former colony. The supplement is set at a level sufficient to raise the pension to the amount which would be payable under the United Kingdom war widows' pension scheme and is usually recalculated annually. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind which he would like me to look into, I should be happy to do so.

War Pensions (Staff)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that the medical branch of the war pensions department of his Department has an adequate number of doctors on its staff to undertake its work effectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Recent delays in processing war pensions claims and appeals have been caused partly by difficulties

in recruiting medical officers. In the last few months a number have been recruited and by mid November we expect that all of the 15 posts at the war pensions branch will be filled. The number of claimants to war pensions awaiting medical decisions has already been reduced to less than half the number six months ago. Provided that successful medical recruitment continues, we are satisfied that the number of doctors will be sufficient to eliminate the delays.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department has spent on office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Major: Information in the form requested is not available. Under the property repayment services arrangements introduced in 1983-84, decorations remain the responsibility of the Property Services Agency, which includes a levy for minor works, including decorations, in the accommodation charge to departments. Before 1983-84, supplies, which include furniture, furnishings, cleaning materials, removal costs and similar expenditure were provided by the Property Services Agency as a common service. Expenditure on supplies by the Department for its HQ, central offices and local offices since then was:

	£ million
1983-84	7·349
1984-85	8·448

It is not possible to estimate separately the cost of office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decorating in these years.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to uprate the Christmas bonus for senior citizens for payment in 1985.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 16 April at column *163* by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the value of the Christmas bonus for senior citizens, had it been uprated by either the movement in average earnings or the retail price index, since its inception.

Mr. Major: If the Christmas bonus had been revalued in line with the movement in *(a)* average earnings (1) or *(b)* the retail price index (2) it would now have been worth £47·72 or £42·33 respectively.

Notes

(1) Based on the Index of Average Earnings (whole economy: seasonally adjusted) for May 1985.

(2) May 1985.

Mr. Paul Escott

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be replying in full to the letter sent on 20 June from the hon. Member for Caerphilly concerning board and lodgings payments to one of his constituents, Mr. Paul Escott of Ystrad Mynach, Mid-Glamorgan.

Mr. Major: I will write to the hon. Member this week.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the costs of meeting mortgage interest payments for claimants of supplementary benefit, other than the unemployed, breaking these down into one-parent families, the sick and disabled and pensioners, and showing how many persons in each category benefit.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to the reply*, 13 May 1985, c. *32*]: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The best figures available, obtained from the Annual Statistical Enquiry 1983 (a copy of which is in the Library) are given in the table. These show the amounts of mortgage interest included in the assessment of supplementary benefit. No account has been taken of adjustments made in respect of non-dependants or other deductions.

Mortgage Interest Considered in Assessment

	Number	Annual Amount (£ million)
One Parent Families	35,000	21
Sick and Disabled	15,000	9
Pensioners	39,000	10
Others (excluding unemployed)	12,000	5

Feverfew

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the manufacture of the herb feverfew will not be restricted as part of his Department's review under schedule 4 of Statutory Instrument No. 41 of 1978.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to the reply*, 12 July 1985, c. *563*]: I regret that part of the information given in the reply was incorrect—a revision follows:

If, under the Medicines Act 1968, we were to receive and grant an application for a new or reviewed product licence, the claims made in promotional literature would have to be consistent with the terms of the product licence. Any restrictions in a licence on advertising would depend on the claims made for the product and the data submitted in support of those claims.

There are three product licences of right for existing medicinal products containing feverfew. These will be subject to review under the Medicines Act in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Salmon

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will seek to ensure that monofilament and nets of similar characteristics are made illegal before the start of the 1986 salmon drift netting season in the Foyle area.

Dr. Boyson: Yes. The use of monofilament nets has been illegal for many years; the provisions of the Foyle

Area (Control of Netting) (Amendment) Regulations 1983 banning two further types of net in common use (multistrand monofilament and single throw monoply, also known as super nylon or Japanese netting), will come into effect on 1 June 1986.

Deaths and Injuries (Statistics)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to give for each year since 1 January 1969, the number of deaths of *(a)* Royal Ulster Constabulary, *(b)* Ulster Special Constabulary, *(c)* Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, *(d)* Regular Army, *(e)* Ulster Defence Regiment and *(f)* civilians, and the number of injuries suffered by the same categories as a result of the civil unrest in Northern Ireland, and, so far as possible, indicate who was responsible for such deaths and the religion of the deceased by category; and if he will update such information at regular intervals.

Mr. Scott: The number of deaths and injuries between 1 January 1969 and 30 September 1985 due to civil unrest in Northern Ireland, and the categories into which they fall are as follows:

*Deaths**	*1969*	*1970*	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*
RUC	1	2	11	14	10	12	7	13	8
RUC (R)	—	—	—	3	3	3	4	10	6
Army	—	—	43	103	58	28	14	14	15
UDR	—	—	5	26	8	7	6	15	14
Civilians	12	23	115	321	171	166	216	245	69
TOTAL	13	25	174	467	250	216	247	297	112
*Injuries**									
RUC	711	191	315	465	257	211	199	236	144
RUC (R)	—	—	—	20	34	24	64	67	39
Army	54	620	381	542	525	453	151	242	172
UDR	—	—	9	36	23	30	16	22	15
Civilians	—	‡243	1,838	3,813	1,812	1,680	2,044	2,162	1,027
TOTAL	765	1,056	2,543	4,876	2,651	2,398	2,474	2,729	1,397

*Deaths**	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	‖*1985*	*Total*
RUC	4	9	3	13	8	9	7	12	143
RUC (R)	6	5	6	8	4	9	2	8	77
Army	14	38	8	10	21	5	9	2	382
UDR	7	10	†9	13	7	10	10	2	149
Civilians	50	51	50	57	57	44	36	21	1,704
TOTAL	81	113	76	101	97	77	64	45	2,455
*Injuries**									
RUC	258	129	166	276	77	112	213	268	4,228
RUC (R)	44	36	28	56	22	30	54	68	586
Army	127	132	53	112	80	66	64	17	3,791
UDR	8	21	24	28	18	22	22	11	305
Civilians	548	557	530	878	328	280	513	359	18,614
TOTAL	985	875	801	1,350	525	510	866	723	27,524

Notes:

* The Ulster Special Constabulary was stood down on 30 April 1970. No members were killed in 1969 or in the first quarter of 1970, and records of injuries during this period were not maintained.

† One death occurred in the Republic of Ireland.

‡ From 1 July 1970 only.

‖ Up to 30 September 1985.

It is believed that Republican terrorist organisations have been responsible for 1,466 deaths and Loyalist terrorist organisations for 662 deaths. These figures include terrorists killed by their own actions. 265 deaths occurred as a result of actions by the security forces. Records of religious affiliations are not maintained.

Statistics relating to the security situation in Northern Ireland are updated on a regular basis and are presented to the House at six monthly intervals, normally in the form of a written reply. Relevant information is also given in the Chief Constable's annual reports, copies of which are placed in the Library.

Demonstrations and Processions

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate whether any elected representative other than hon. Members made representations to him or to the Chief Constable that the demonstrations and processions which took place in the months of June and July to date in *(a)* Limavady, *(b)* Maghera, *(c)* Cookstown, *(d)* Castlewellan and *(e)* Portadown, should be (i) re-routed and (ii) banned.

Mr. King: I understand my predecessor received several such representations from councillors and

members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. They all concerned processions in Portadown. I cannot, of course, speak for the Chief Constable.

As the hon. Member will know, the police are responsible for re-routing processions while power to prohibit a demonstration or procession rests with the Secretary of State.

Royal Prerogative

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the persons who have been released under the Royal Prerogative from prisons in Northern Ireland in each year from 1980 to the latest available date, and indicate the offences for which they were convicted, the periods to which they were sentenced and the normal release date with full remission in each case.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available in the form requested and it is not our practice to give details of releases under the Royal Prerogative of Mercy. However, the numbers of persons released under the Royal Prerogative of Mercy from Northern Ireland prisons each year since 1980 are:

	Number
1980	112
1981	63
1982	53
1983	36
1984	28
*1985	4
Total	296

* To 10 August 1985.

Belfast City Hospital

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision has been made to ensure prompt evacuation of patients, staff and visitors at the tower block of Belfast city hospital in the event of fire or a terrorist bomb affecting lifts or stairs.

Mr. Needham: Provision has been made for the evacuation of patients, staff and visitors to designated fire-safe zones within the building.

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff, medical, office and ancillaries, are expected to be employed in the tower block of Belfast city hospital when it is fully operational; and what is the maximum number of patients who can be accommodated in the tower block.

Mr. Needham: The total number of staff will be around 1,950 whole time equivalents. The total bed complement is 583.

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is satisfied with the fire precautions which will be in force when the new tower block at Belfast city hospital is opened; how many lifts exist in the tower block, and whether separate emergency power will be provided to different groups of lifts.

Mr. Needham: Yes. There are 13 lifts in the building and provision has been made for separate emergency power supplies to each lift.

Maze Prison

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what sort of work has been done by persons convicted of scheduled offences and serving sentences in the Maze prison, where the prisoners are or are believed to be members of *(a)* the Provisional Irish Republican Army, *(b)* the Official Irish Republican Army, *(c)* the Irish Republican Socialist Party, *(d)* the Irish National Liberation Army, *(e)* the Ulster Defence Association, *(f)* the Ulster Volunteer Force and *(g)* other terrorist organisations in (i) 1981, (ii) 1982, (iii) 1983, (iv) 1984 and (v) 1985; and if there are any kinds of work which the prisoners refused to do;

(2) why it was decided to terminate the employment of civilian instructors at the Maze prison; how long it has been since they actually gave instruction to prisoners there where the prisoners concerned were members of terrorist organisations; what savings he expects as a result of their dismissal; and what the cost of employing them has been in each year since they last gave regular instruction to prisoners who were members of terrorist organisations;

(3) what sort of free association is presently enjoyed by prisoners convicted of scheduled offences at the Maze prison; when it was introduced; and what groups enjoy such free association;

(4) whether any groups of terrorist prisoners in the Maze prison are allowed one letter, one visit and one parcel per week and can arrange their own recreational activities;

(5) whether Her Majesty's Government plan to restore the remaining 50 per cent of remission lost by prisoners in the Maze prison during the hunger strike, or to provide conditions under which it would be restored; and if he will make a statement;

(6) which aspects of the five demands made by terrorist prisoners in the Maze prison during the hunger strike have not as yet been incorporated in changes in prison régime and policies;

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether persons convicted of scheduled offences and imprisoned in Northern Ireland have the right to wear their own clothes and exercise that right.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether he will list each form of regional support payable from public funds to business, industry, and the professions in Ulster, and the names of agencies responsible for such payments;

(2) if he will list the total cost of regional assistance payable in Ulster for each year since 1970 under each heading of support payable to business, industry and the professions, and for each county;

(3) if he will list the total cost of assistance for employment and training measures payable in Ulster for

each year since 1970 under each heading of support payable to business, industry and the professions, and for each county.

Dr. Boyson: A full listing of the various schemes of assistance to businesses in Northern Ireland is provided in "Support for Industry", published by the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The elements which equate to regional support in Great Britain are the standard capital grants scheme, administered by the Department of Economic Development, and the selective financial assistance provided by the Industrial Development Board or — in the case of smaller companies — by the local enterprise development unit. Gross expenditure on these elements, and on employment and training measures, since 1970, are as follows. Records are not kept of expenditure by county.

Year	*Standard Capital Grants (Department of Economic Development)*	*Selective Assistance by the Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU)*	*Selective Assistance by the Industrial Development Board (IDB) and the former Department of Commerce (DOC)*	*Employment and Training Measures (Department of Economic Development)*
1970-71	18,400,000	—	29,200,665	3,095,316
1971-72	17,600,000	173,803	33,365,201	4,391,675
1972-73	7,987,195	605,288	34,794,492	7,040,145
1973-74	8,500,000	1,200,122	47,358,781	8,334,021
1974-75	15,000,000	2,235,000	41,116,301	13,728,508
1975-76	30,872,541	2,100,000	49,631,722	19,951,552
1976-77	27,704,847	2,451,000	63,410,733	34,571,419
1977-78	31,831,113	3,255,000	54,246,235	44,954,838
1978-79	27,217,901	4,445,000	97,556,127	55,459,998
1979-80	18,369,436	5,749,884	100,164,409	61,208,915
1980-81	39,806,441	5,643,650	115,806,718	68,633,615
1981-82	41,705,132	5,969,000	79,280,974	72,930,337
1982-83	52,834,831	8,799,000	104,525,408	87,766,740
1983-84	40,675,000	13,650,000	83,575,000	96,103,000
1984-85*	54,000,000	15,100,000	84,964,000	85,260,000
1985-86*	35,000,000	16,700,000	79,216,000	82,338,000

* Estimated.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total volume of expenditure allocated to local authorities, the health authorities, the Housing Executive and all other recipients of public expenditure in Ulster in 1984-85.

Dr. Boyson: The allocation of public funds in 1984-85 to bodies whose expenditure is not classified as central Government expenditure are shown below. Information about allocations to a wide range of other bodies funded directly by Northern Ireland Departments, whose expenditure is classified as central Government expenditure, can be found in the 1984-85 Estimates for Services under the Government of Northern Ireland.

	£000
Education and library boards	206,433
Grants to district councils	17,144
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	299,100
Northern Ireland Electricity Service	82,905
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company	20,518
Northern Ireland public trust ports	637
Police Authority for Northern Ireland	254,452
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	16,805

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the level of central Government expenditure in Ulster for each of the years 1970 to 1984.

Dr. Boyson: The following figures show the total outturn of public expenditure for the years 1976-77 to 1983-84 for those services which are the direct responsibility either of the Northern Ireland Office or of Northern Ireland Departments. These figures are as far as possible on a consistent basis in terms of the services covered, and reflect the definitions of public expenditure contained in the 1984 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9143). Figures for earlier years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

	£ million cash
1976-77	1,300
1977-78	1,429
1978-79	1,713
1979-80	2,021
1980-81	2,342
1981-82	2,638
1982-83	2,832
1983-84	3,043

Rates

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the average rate per hereditament payable in each district authority in Ulster.

Mr. Needham: The figures for 1985-86 are as follows:

District council area	*Average rates payable per hereditament* £
Antrim	492·08
Ards	326·67
Armagh	263·55
Ballymena	363·11
Ballymoney	310·02
Banbridge	306·11
Belfast	497·87
Carrickfergus	453·43
Castlereagh	321·18
Coleraine	398·12
Cookstown	271·33
Craigavon	359·84
Derry	443·62
Down	319·85
Dungannon	261·49
Fermanagh	266·01
Larne	331·24
Limavady	321·50
Lisburn	412·39
Magherafelt	259·92
Moyle	306·31
Newry and Mourne	297·59
Newtownabbey	410·40
North Down	397·90
Omagh	301·85
Strabane	254·37

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the total cost to ratepayers in Ulster of funding education and housing provision separately.

Dr. Boyson: In Northern Ireland in 1985-86, £81·1 million and £13·2 million respectively.

Recreational Facilities

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total cost to the Exchequer of all community recreational facilities in Ulster for each year since 1970.

Mr. Scott: Government expenditure directly related to community recreational facilities in Northern Ireland was as follows:

	£
1970-71	683,482
1971-72	1,048,469
1972-73	1,324,908
1973-74	2,530,435
1974-75	4,469,550
1975-76	6,205,267
1976-77	7,242,340
1977-78	7,460,346
1978-79	8,270,274
1979-80	9,534,630
1980-81	9,858,927
1981-82	7,662,269
1982-83	10,416,527
1983-84	9,725,078
1984-85	8,485,382

In addition some £9·6 million has been provided towards the provision of tourist amenities, many of which have also made a useful contribution to community recreational facilities. Projects undertaken through the action for community employment scheme and by Enterprise Ulster have included community recreational schemes but details of such expenditure could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Education (Funding)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the means by which educational services are funded in Ulster.

Mr. Scott: Grants are paid to the education and library boards by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) for the day to day operation of the services in their areas, including the running of controlled schools and the maintenance of most voluntary schools, provision of school meals and school transport services, awards to students in higher and further education, and library, further education and youth services. For this purpose, boards receive 100 per cent. grants from DENI on all approved recurrent and capital expenditure.

The salaries of the majority of teachers are paid directly by DENI with the exception of part-time teachers in controlled schools and colleges of further education, who are paid by the boards, and teachers in voluntary grammar schools who are paid directly by their employing schools.

Other grants paid by DENI include capital grants (normally at the rate of 85%) to all voluntary schools, grants to voluntary grammar schools in respect of their recurrent expenditure, recurrent and capital grants to the teacher training colleges, museums and the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, grants to the Northern Ireland Sports Council and capital grants (at 75%) to district councils for the provision of recreational facilities. The Department also pays grants to the two Northern Ireland universities on the advice of the University Grants Committee, and to numerous other bodies concerned with various aspects of educational, recreational, youth service and community provision.

Housing (Funding)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the means by which housing services are funded in Ulster.

Mr. Needham: The sole public housing authority in Northern Ireland is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; the capital expenditure of which is financed by borrowing, mainly, from Government, and by capital receipts from the sale of dwellings and land and from mortgage redemptions. The Housing Executive's revenue expenditure on loan charges, management, maintenance and general administration is financed partly by rental income and partly by a "Housing Grant" from the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to meet the difference between rental income and approved revenue expenditure. House renovation grants paid by the Housing Executive are also financed directly by the Department. The housing grant, financing of renovation grants, assistance to registered housing associations and the private sector and expenditure on other miscellaneous housing services are met from monies voted by Parliament.

Teachers

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of providing cover for absent teachers in Northern Ireland schools in the period April to June in each of the last three years.

Mr. Scott:

	£ million
April-June 1983	3·00
April-June 1984	3·44
April-June 1985	4·00

Mr. John De Lorean

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the investigation being carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary into the business affairs of Mr. John De Lorean.

Mr. King: The Royal Ulster Constabulary is investigating the alleged misappropriation of funds from De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd. which has been in receivership and in liquidation since 1982.

Youth Training

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when, and to what level, he intends to raise the allowance paid to trainees on the youth training programme.

Dr. Boyson: From 1 April 1986 the present single rate of allowance (£27·30 per week) will be replaced by a two-tier system in which trainees will receive either £27·30 per week or £35·00 per week, depending upon when they left school and the training subsequently undertaken. Northern Ireland will thus continue to maintain parity with the rest of the United Kingdom in relation to the level of allowance and the date of introduction of any increase.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EEC intergovernmental conference on amendments to the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Rifkind: The first session of the conference was held on 9 September. A further ministerial meeting is taking place today. There have been regular meetings of senior officials in a preparatory group to discuss possible amendments to the treaty, covering in particular those measures necessary to complete the common market; the role of the European Parliament; and whether to update the treaty to include specific reference to the activities of the Research and Environment Councils.

Constitution

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the proceedings and outcome of the meetings of the European Economic Community held in September relating to constitutional changes in the Community on the basis agreed at the Milan meeting.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) earlier today.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Renton: The Third Review Conference ended successfully on 21 September with the adoption by consensus of a final document. This included a solemn declaration by the parties of their conviction that the treaty is essential to international peace and security, their continued support for its objectives and their determination to enhance the implementation of the treaty and further to strengthen its authority.

We warmly welcome this outcome which demonstrates renewed recognition of the importance of the treaty in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons. It gives us confidence that the treaty will continue to play an essential role in international security and in facilitating the worldwide use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Royal Highland Show

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost to public funds of the Peace Through NATO stall at the recent 1985 Royal Highland Show at Ingliston.

Mr. Renton: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the Ministry of Defence NATO British Defence Policy Exhibition mounted at various locations throughout the United Kingdom during 1985. At each venue, including the Royal Highland Show at Ingliston, a Peace Through NATO (PTN) representative was available to answer PTN questions and distribute PTN literature.

PTN received a grant-in-aid of £74,500 from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for 1985-86. Its representative at Ingliston was a volunteer. The proportion of the grant used on the show was therefore minimal and merely covered the cost of literature distributed.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department has spent on office furniture, carpets and curtains and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office including the Overseas Development Administration has office accommodation at home and overseas.

The Department of the Environment was responsible for the supply of all these items and services overseas until 1 April 1983 when the Foreign and Commonwealth Office assumed responsibility. Expenditure on office furniture, carpets and curtains for use overseas was as follows:

Financial year	Total £
1980-81	286,870
1981-82	240,951
1982-83	277,786
1983-84	516,093
1984-85	496,874

It is not possible to identify decoration costs separately from maintenance costs, of which they form a part.

The Department of the Environment similarly supplied all these items and services without charge in respect of office accommodation in the United Kingdom until 1 April 1983. Thereafter major decorations remained the responsibility of the Department of the Environment whilst minor decorations became a departmental responsibility. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office spent £34,348 (1983-84) and £49,185 (1984-85) on minor decorations. Expenditure on office furniture, carpets and curtains in the United Kingdom was £513,167 (1983-84) and £529,281 (1984-85).

India

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with the Prime Minister of India.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Rajiv Gandhi visited the United Kingdom on 14-15 October at the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. During his visit there were discussions with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend and a number of other Ministers. A wide range of international, regional and bilateral issues were covered, in an extremely cordial atmosphere.

WALES

Capital Grants Scheme

7. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the reductions recently announced in the new capital grants scheme; and what estimate he has made of the effects of these reductions in lowland and upland farming areas of Wales, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received five representations against the reductions in grant rates announced on 8 July. The changes made to the farm capital grant schemes have also been raised at my meetings with the farming unions in Wales.

It is estimated that in a full year savings of up to £5·7 million could result from these changes. This would be approximately £4·6 million in the upland farming areas of Wales and £1·1 million in the lowland.

The agriculture improvement scheme, introduced on 1 October, will continue to provide financial support for a wide range of farm improvements and will help farmers who wish to diversify into tourism or craft works.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the current unemployment in Ogmore, Mid-Glamorgan and Wales; and what were the percentage increases since May 1979 and since October 1984.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 September 1985 the number of unemployed claimants were 4,951, 36,975 and 187,563 respectively. Comparable figures for May 1979 in respect of the Ogmore constituency and Mid-Glamorgan are not available because of the move to claimant based figures. The estimated increase in percentage terms for Wales is 143 per cent. Since October 1984 there have been increases of 8 per cent., 5·2 per cent. and 4·8 per cent. respectively.

Rural Development, Powys

13. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of assistance available for rural development projects in the county of Powys.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The county benefits from a wide range of Government and European measures to assist rural development including the work of agencies such as the Development Board for Rural Wales. My aim is to see this support continue and where possible expand.

Common Agricultural Policy

14. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the farming unions and others in Wales during the past three months concerning the effects of the common agricultural policy of the European Economic Community on Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I closely monitor development in the industry and have frequent meetings with the farming unions and other industry representatives — in the course of which I receive many representations on the operation of the CAP. These are mainly concerned with the dairying and livestock sectors, particularly the problems of fodder supply caused by recent bad weather.

Roadworks

15. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current progress of work on the A55 dual carriageway and on the provision of bypasses around the five villages on Anglesey on the A5.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We are continuing to make good progress with the upgrading of the A55. Eleven sections have been completed to date, including the Colwyn Bay bypass which was fully opened to traffic in June. Construction is presently underway on the Holywell and Bodelwyddan bypasses. Tenders for the Penmaenbach-Dwygyfylchi improvement have been invited and construction is expected to start early in the new year. Preparation of the remaining stages of the improvement programme is well in hand.

On bypasses on the A5 in Anglesey the report of the consulting engineers is still expected by the end of the year.

House Building

17. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage change in net public expenditure on house building in Wales between 1979-80 and 1984-85 in real and cash terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Local authority and housing association receipts can be used to finance both new house-building and other capital expenditure such as major repairs. It is therefore not possible to give the figures requested.

Bankruptcies and Company Liquidations

18. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many personal bankruptcies and company liquidations, respectively, there were in Wales between 1975 and 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In the period from the beginning of 1975 to the second quarter of 1985 there were 3,549 bankruptcies dealt with by county courts in Wales. This figure includes both individuals and partnerships. Separate statistics relating to company liquidations in Wales are not available.

Sunday Trading

19. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about a possible change in legislation relating to Sunday trading in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Eleven representations have been received at the Welsh Office since, and eight before, the report of the committee of inquiry into proposals to amend the Shops Act was published.

Home-School Liaison

20. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many courses during 1984 and 1985 in home-school liaison being run for parents at weekends and evenings were *(a)* initiated by Her Majesty's Inspectors; *(b)* attended by Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. The prime responsibility for facilitating home-school links rests with local education authorities and individual schools. Her Majesty's Inspectorate has different responsibilities, one of which is to seek to ensure the wide dissemination of examples of good practice. In the exercise of this responsibility Her Majesty's Inspectorate has published two occasional papers in recent years on home-school links; Home-School Links (Secondary Phase) in November 1983 and Links between Parents, Community and Primary Schools in June 1985. The good practice discussed in these papers was based on HMI visits to schools when home-school links are discussed and specific reference made to them in inspection reports. In addition HMI attends the meetings of school governing bodies, which include parent representative members when the inspection reports are considered and I understand some of Her Majesty's inspectors have addressed parents meetings at schools.

Parrot Corporation

21. **Mr. Abse** asked the Secretary of State for Wales why, as agent for the European Coal and Steel Community, he permitted £2½ million advanced by the European Coal and Steel Community and intended for working capital for the Parrot Corporation, Cwmbran, to be used as a guarantee against a loan; why he permitted this sum to be frozen in the American bank Northern Investments; why the guarantee was not disclosed by the Welsh Development Authority to the National Coal Board pension fund and other City institutions; and what steps he is now taking to protect the employees of and the public funds invested in the Parrot Corporation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department is not an agent for the ECSC. Its involvement in the original financing of the Parrot Corporation project was confined to making an offer of regional selective assistance and exchange risk cover on the ECSC loan. My consent for the Welsh Development Agency's original investment was not required. On 8 October the chairman of the Parrot Corporation announced that a refinancing package, including further investment both by the WDA, to which I had given my approval, and by the other original investors, had been agreed to secure the future of the company.

The circumstances of the original investment are under investigation by the police.

Public Housing (Sales)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state up to the latest convenient date how many tenants have purchased their dwellings from local authorities and other public bodies in Wales during the previous 12 months and during the period since 1979 respectively, and how many such purchases await completion.

Mr. Mark Robinson: During the 12 month period ending 30 June 1985, it is provisionally estimated that 5,889 public sector dwellings were sold to sitting tenants. Between 1 January 1979 and 30 June 1985, the corresponding figure was 47,689.

The provisional estimate of the number of local authority purchases awaiting completion at 30 June 1985, is 4,562. Figures for outstanding housing association sales and new town sales are not held centrally.

Defective Housing

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's estimate of the amount of cash required to correct and repair defective housing in Wales, what action his Department has taken to assess the state of disrepair in Welsh housing, what extra cash he proposes to allocate to local authorities, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is impossible to estimate with any accuracy the cost of bringing each house in Wales up to a satisfactory standard of repair. The Welsh house condition survey which our Department is undertaking next year will be by far the largest house condition survey ever carried out in Wales. The survey will provide the first detailed analysis of the state of repair of the stock and will provide data valid at district council level. The results will be taken into account in determining future allocations to local authorities for housing expenditure.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost of correcting housing defects in Wales which fall within the scope of the Housing Defects Act 1984, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There are about 1,500 privately owned PRC dwellings in Wales which could benefit from either grant or repurchase under the Act. We estimate the cost at about £21 million.

Mineral Resources

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the estimated reserves of sand and gravel within the area of each Welsh county, what estimates he has of the requirements for sand and gravel in the Principality up to the end of the century, what mineral reserves in Wales he expects to be worked out before the end of the century, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The most recent estimates of permitted reserves of land-won sand and gravel were made by the aggregates working parties for North Wales and South Wales following a survey of the position on 1 January 1982. The figures are:

	Permitted sand and gravel reserves at 1.1.82 Million Tonnes
NORTH WALES	
Clwyd	15·3
Gwynedd	4·6
SOUTH WALES	
Dyfed	1·2
Powys	
Mid Glamorgan	0·5
West Glamorgan	
Gwent	Nil
South Glamorgan	Nil

Note: Figures for South Wales are bracketed for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Reserves of marine deposits and gravel were not quantifiable.

Requirements for the production of sand and gravel for the period 1981-1991 as identified by the aggregates working parties are set out in Welsh Office circular 30/82, "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales". The requirements for both land-won and marine-dredged production for 1981-1991 are:

Region	*Requirement for sand and gravel Million Tonnes*
North Wales	17-26
South Wales	14-25

Further surveys of both permitted reserves and forecast demand will be carried out in 1986.

Reserves of sand and gravel or other minerals likely to be worked out over a future period cannot be readily or accurately assessed.

Welsh Voluntary Trust

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to establish a Welsh voluntary trust, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We are aware that the establishment of a Welsh voluntary trust is currently the subject of debate within the voluntary sector. We are following developments with interest.

Children (Eczema and Diabetes)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department proposes any action in Wales in the light of the Medical Research Council's national survey of health and development for children with special regard to eczema and diabetes, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My hon. Friend the Minister for Health and I are awaiting the Medical Research Council's considerations of the latest results of this continuous survey and it would be inappropriate for me to comment in the meantime.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many ancillary jobs there were in the local education authorities in Wales in 1980 and in 1984-85, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In June 1980, 22,983 whole-time equivalent non-teaching staff were employed in the local authority education sector in Wales; in June 1984, the corresponding figure was 22,347.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure on road maintenance in each Welsh county for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86, if he will express the changes in real terms, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Using the gross domestic product deflator with the base year of 1984-85 the figures for maintenance expenditure on trunk and county roads are:

	1979-80 Outturn £M	*1980-81 Outturn* £M	*1981-82 Outturn* £M	*1982-83 Outturn* £M	*1983-84 Outturn* £M	*1984-85 Estimated Outturn* £M	*1985-86 Provision* £M
Clwyd	16·7	13·3	18·5	15·1	15·0	12·3	12·8
Dyfed	18·9	16·5	20·2	16·2	16·7	17·7	17·3
Gwent	13·6	14·5	17·5	14·2	14·0	14·8	24·5
Gwynedd	16·5	13·6	16·2	13·1	12·7	13·6	14·9
Mid Glamorgan	17·8	15·7	19·7	16·9	17·5	17·0	18·0
Powys	14·6	12·8	10·8	8·7	11·0	11·1	11·2
South Glamorgan	12·4	10·9	12·4	12·1	12·8	9·9	10·2
West Glamorgan	12·6	11·1	12·5	12·2	11·7	13·7	13·0
Wales	122·9	108·4	127·8	108·5	114·4	110·1	121·7

(*Note:* Figures include certain expenditure by local authorities on road safety and lighting installation: together this amounted to only about 1% of the local authority total in 1981-82 (the last year for which separate figures are available).)

The 1984 national road maintenance condition survey indicates that the overall condition of roads in England and Wales in 1984 was broadly comparable to that in 1977 though there have been variations in condition from year

to year, and in respect of particular classes of road. Expenditure on trunk road maintenance has increased in recent years and I intend to maintain provision at about the present level in future years. The level of expenditure by local highway authorities is for them to determine in the light of their own priorities.

Hotel and Catering Trade

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of those Welsh people engaged full time in the hotel and catering trade currently earn less than *(a)* £160 per week, *(b)* £120 per week, *(c)* £100 per week, *(d)* £80 per week and *(e)* £60 per week; what assessment he has made of the impact upon wages for under-21s in Wales consequent upon the abolition of wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information in respect of earnings in the hotel and catering trade in Wales is not available in the form requested.

As announced on 17 July wages councils are to be reformed not abolished and appropriate legislation will be brought before the House in due course.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently employed in the hotel and catering trade in Wales, and if he will specify how many are engaged in part-time or temporary work.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At the time of the 1981 census of employment there were 43,570 persons employed in the hote: and catering industry of whom 25,911 were working part-time. These figures include any temporary workers who were in employment at the time of the census, but it is not possible to identify such workers separately. These figures will remain the most up to date estimates of the position until the results of the 1984 census of employment are available early in 1986.

Dangerous Drugs (Advice and Counselling)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the amount of money given by the Government to drugs advisory and counselling organisations in Wales for each of the years 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Government funding for the provision of advisory, counselling and health education activities by district health authorities, local education authorities and voluntary groups to combat drug misuse in Wales has been allocated in each year as follows:

	£
1979-80	6,075
1980-81	7,050
1981-82	7,590
1982-83	7,993
1983-84	8,472
1984-85	14,393
1985-86	270,654

In addition, the Welsh Office has allocated £200,000in 1985-86 as a contribution to the Government's national publicity campaign on drug misuse.

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take further steps to protect leasehold tenants in Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) at column 389 on 18 March 1985 by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes have been provided by Welsh housing associations in each year from 1980 to 1984 and what is the estimate for the number of homes to be provided in the current year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The numbers of units provided by housing associations in Wales for each of the last five financial years are:

	Number
1980-81	1,169
1981-82	2,422
1982-83	2,318
1983-84	1,672
1984-85	1,719

The best estimate available for 1985-86 is 1,700.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total Government funding to Welsh housing associations for each year 1979-80 to 1985-86, exclusive of capital receipts, and if he will express the change in the local funding in real terms.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Government funding to Welsh housing associations takes the form of housing association grant, hostel deficit grant, revenue deficit grant and grants under Section 93 of the Finance Act 1975 which have been paid, in total, as follows:

	£ million cash	*£ million at 1985-86 prices*
1979-80	22·2	35·6
1980-81	20·5	27·7
1981-82	15·0	18·4
1982-83	30·5	35·0
1983-84	32·9	36·1
1984-85	47·9	50·3
1985-86*	40·5	40·5

* Estimated.

Education (Parental Contributions)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total and proportional amount of money provided towards Welsh state sector secondary school capitation funding through parental voluntary contributions in each of the last five yars, to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on money provided for schools through voluntary parental contributions is not collected by the Department.

Council House Rents

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average rise in Welsh council house rents in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: On the basis of returns made by local authorities to the Department, the information is estimated to be as follows:

*Average rise in council house rents in Wales**

	£ per week
1981-82	+3·34
1982-83	+2·54
1983-84	+0·66
1984-85	+1·01
1985-86†	+0·82

* The rent figures used are average unrebated rents (exclusive of rates) for each financial year.

† The increase shown for 1985-86 is provisional because only 27 local authority returns (out of a total of 37) have been submitted to date.

Over the five-year period from 1981-82 to 1985-86, following the introduction of a separate RSG system for Wales, domestic and non-domestic rate poundages increased by 40·6 per cent. and 21·0 per cent. respectively; average increases of 7·1 per cent. and 3·9 per cent. per annum respectively. This compares with aggregate increases over the last four years of the previous administration (1974-75, following the reorganisation of local government, to 1978-79) of 118·8 per cent. in domestic rates and 58·1 per cent. in non-domestic rates; annual average increases of 21·6 per cent. and 12·1 per cent. respectively. The reduction in the rate of increase under this Government clearly demonstrates the success in Wales of our policies for local government finance and has benefited the taxpayer, industry and commerce and the domestic ratepayer.

Rates

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average rise in *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial rates in Wales for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The average increase in domestic and non-domestic (including industrial) rate poundages in each of the last five years, together with percentage increases, is as follows:

	Domestic poundage (p)	*Percentage*	*Non-domestic poundage (p)*	*Percentage*
1981-82	21·4	20·4	20·1	14·2
1982-83	*22·3	17·6	5·1	3·1
1983-84	1·3	0·9	1·2	0·7
1984-85	13·9	9·3	13·6	8·1
1985-86	13·8	8·4	14·2	7·8

*Domestic rate relief was reduced from 36p in the pound in 1981-82 to 18·5p in 1982-83.

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children aged under 16 years are currently on Welsh hospital outpatient waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information about the age of persons on hospital outpatient waiting lists is not available.

O and A-level Examinations

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh students in state-funded secondary schools and sixth form colleges this year sat O or A-level examinations in *(a)* one modern language, *(b)* two modern languages, *(c)* computer-related subjects, *(d)* Latin, *(e)* economics and *(f)* sociology; what have been the relevant figures for each of the five previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information, as supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee, is as follows:

*Candidates in maintained secondary schools and tertiary colleges**

		1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
'O' Level:							
	One modern language	..	..	..	..	..	4,835
	Two modern languages	..	..	..	..	..	868
	Computer studies	1,596	2,168	2,925	3,582	4,485	5,293
	Latin	893	853	765	688	613	582
	Economics	2,034	2,276	2,186	2,133	1,958	1,934
	Sociology	504	777	810	1,259	1,161	1,127
'A' Level:							
	One modern language	..	..	..	..	..	690
	Two modern languages	..	..	..	..	..	210
	Computer studies	73	103	223	276	391	476
	Latin	78	84	80	83	71	71
	Economics	1,429	1,500	1,716	1,721	1,725	1,794
	Sociology	85	64	167	304	362	321

* Candidates taking WJEC summer examinations. Figures exclude external candidates.
.. Signifies that the information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh students in the current year took A or O-level examinations in specialist mathematics subjects.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information, as supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee, is as follows:

	*Candidates in maintained schools and further education establishments Number
'O' Level:	
CS Mathematics†	32,724
Additional Mathematics‡	2,794
Statistics	1,219
'A' Level:	
Mathematics	2,703
Pure mathematics	274
Applied Mathematics	191

* Candidates taking WJEC summer examinations. Figures include candidates from tertiary colleges, but exclude external candidates.

† Common syllabus and examination system for GCE 'O' level and CSE.

‡ Alternative Ordinary (AO) examinations comprising Further Pure Mathematics, Mechanics or Statistics options.

Play Groups

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many places were available to children in Welsh district council-run play groups this summer, what has been the figure for each previous summer since 1978, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Playgroup facilities are provided by county council social services departments, and information collected relates to 31 March each year. Information for 1985 is not yet available, but details for 1978-84 are given in the following table:

	Places in playgroups provided by local authorities in Wales Number
1978	312
1979	292
1980	292
1981	272
1982	292
1983	318
1984	308

Alpha Steel

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of grants and other financial assistance given to Alpha Steel since its location in Gwent; how much in EEC grants and other financial assistance Alpha Steel has received since its location in Gwent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: We have no record of financial assistance to Alpha Steel either from central Government or European Community funds.

Community Programme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many community programme places there are in Wales, how many extra community jobs will be provided in Wales as a result of the Government's economic measures, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: At the end of August 1985 over 10,000 people were on community programme projects in Wales, and the June 1986 filled places target currently totals 20,540.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Wales why he approved of Mr. Neil Taylor leaving his employment in the Welsh Development Agency to become a financial consultant to the Parrot Corporation, and what steps he has taken to renegotiate contracts of service of executives of the Welsh Development Agency to ensure that a suitable interval of time elapses before an executive can be employed by companies who have obtained loans or grants from the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The terms of employment of WDA employees are a matter for the board of the agency and my approval for any arrangements between former agency employees and other bodies is not required. I understand that since October 1983 the agency has included a clause in the contracts of certain senior staff on their appointment requiring the permission of the board to be obtained before accepting appointments within two years of leaving the agency.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last visited the offices in Gwent of the Parrot Corporation and when he last met Parrot executives, when he proposes to have discussions with Parrot concerning the corporation's recent financial difficulties and its proposed board changes, how many employees of Parrot are at work in South Wales, how much in EEC loans and cash Parrot has received; how much cash and loans Parrot has received from Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement concerning the financial affairs of the Parrot Corporation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have not visited the offices of the Parrot Corporation. I met a senior executive of the corporation on one occasion, in September 1983 and I met the chairman last month. The company employs 86 people at Cwmbran. It has received an ECSC loan of £2·5 million on which my Department has provided exchange risk cover. Apart from WDA funds and guarantee, the company has accepted an offer of regional selective assistance of £1 million of which £500,000 has been paid to date together with £274,000 in regional development grant.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh Development Agency advance factories were untenanted at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Welsh Development Agency had 510 untenanted advance factories at 30 September 1985. Of these, 125 units were already allocated to prospective tenants and the future use of six units was being decided. There were 379 advance factories vacant and available for letting.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement concerning the qualifications by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the accounts of the Welsh Development Agency, what

discussions he has had with the Comptroller and Auditor General on this matter; and what talks he plans with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency;

(2) if, in the light of the qualification of the accounts of the Welsh Development Agency by the Comptroller and Auditor General, he proposes to discuss the valuation of the property portfolio of the Welsh Development Agency with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and the Comptroller and Auditor General, what action he proposes, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There is nothing I can usefully add to the two letters which have already been sent to the hon. Gentleman explaining the background to the Comptroller and Auditor General's comments. I have not discussed the matter with the Comptroller and Auditor General and I have no plans to do so with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency. My officials are currently in discussion with the WDA concerning a review of the useful life of its factories and consequential changes in depreciation policy in preparation for the publication of the WDA's 1985-86 annual accounts.

Job Creation

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to take further steps to seek to reduce unemployment in Wales during the next two years, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My aim is to see the best use made of the Government's comprehensive range of policies for tackling the causes and effects of unemployment and generating new jobs in the economy as a whole.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to create new jobs in mid-Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Mid Wales remains eligible for a wide range of Government schemes and initiatives designed to regenerate the economy and improve employment prospects. I am keeping the position under review and am always ready to consider ways of sustaining and expanding the rural economy in Wales.

Derelict Land Reclamation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what effect he expects the revised National Coal Board policy on pit closures to have on the level of derelict land reclamation in Wales over the next three years in terms of overall funding and priorities.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I understand that the Welsh Development Agency is currently inviting bids from local authorities for inclusion in a new land reclamation programme. Priorities will be assessed in the light of local authorities' views as shown in these bids. The agency's budget for land reclamation in the next financial year will be published in the Supply Estimates next Spring.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total spending on derelict land reclamation in Wales in each of the last five years to date and what are the estimates for 1985-86 and 1986-87;

(2) what was the total funding for derelict land reclamation and environmental improvement by the Welsh Development Agency in each of the last five years to date, and what are the estimates for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The bulk of public sector assistance for land reclamation over the last five years has been in the form of grant from the Welsh Development Agency. The agency's spending on derelict land reclamation and environmental improvement in each of the last five years was as follows:

	£ millions		
	Land Reclamation	*Environmental Improvement*	*Total*
1980-81	9·62	0·57	10·19
1981-82	9·90	0·51	10·41
1982-83	9·51	0·31	9·82
1983-84	11·23	0·94	12·17
1984-85	9·83	0·67	10·50

The WDA's estimated budget for land reclamation and environmental improvement in 1985-86 is £9 million and £0·5 million respectively. In addition it is anticipated that a total of some £1·5 million of urban development grant will be paid in support of land reclamation in south Cardiff in 1985-86 and 1986-87.

I am not in a position to announce funding for land reclamation in 1986-87 in advance of the publication of the WDA's budget in the Supply Estimates next spring.

Agriculture

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of the agricultural industry in Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The poor summer has posed many problems for the agriculture industry in Wales, but my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture has confirmed that help will be made available to those producers most seriously affected. The economic conditions and prospects for the industry will be examined in detail in the forthcoming review of hill livestock compensatory allowances and the annual review of agriculture.

National Health Service (Pest Control)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has studied the report of the British Pest Control Association concerning National Health Service buildings, a copy of which has been sent to him, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have not yet received the report but a paper based on it and prepared by the association is being studied by the Department's environmental health adviser.

Voluntary Work

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the review of voluntary work in Wales by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, a copy of which has been sent to him, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The recommendations arising from the review are still the subject of discussion within the voluntary sector in Wales and we will monitor the outcome closely.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for January, July and September of each of the past 10 years the unemployment level for each employment office area in Gwynedd.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is as follows:

	1976		
Employment office area	*January*	*July*	*September*
Amlwch	490	453	461
Holyhead	1,043	1,039	1,038
Llangefni	747	652	626
Beaumaris	289	237	253
Pwllheli	755	354	489
Penygroes	280	218	201
Porthmadog	480	284	283
Caernarfon	1,124	877	856
Bangor	1,160	829	805
Bethesda	246	204	180
Conwy	612	511	570
Llanrwst*	252	233	203
Blaenau Ffestiniog	370	239	283
Barmouth	331	145	162
Machynlleth*	153	146	152
Llangollen*	550	385	420
Llandudno	603	364	421

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

	1977		
Employment office area	*January*	*July*	*September*
Amlwch	499	354	409
Holyhead	1,002	968	1,104
Llangefni	751	626	675
Beaumaris	271	262	285
Pwllheli	685	428	463
Penygroes	201	179	216
Porthmadog	451	283	327
Caernarfon	814	743	877
Bangor	721	710	968
Bethesda	181	148	187
Conwy	646	483	550
Llanrwst*	233	205	216
Blaenau Ffestiniog	310	216	272
Barmouth	315	195	210
Machynlleth*	181	158	162
Llangollen*	462	424	432
Llandudno	695	405	411

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

	1978		
Employment office area	*January*	*July*	*September*
Amlwch	445	431	432
Holyhead	1,095	1,201	1,229
Llangefni	722	622	600
Beaumaris	283	272	229
Pwllheli	736	460	456
Penygroes	252	191	200
Porthmadog	485	282	297
Caernarfon	879	915	854
Bangor	872	989	889
Bethesda	177	161	184
Conwy	574	473	438
Llanrwst*	255	174	151
Blaenau Ffestiniog	288	261	248
Barmouth	313	147	211
Machynlleth*	154	126	128
Llangollen*	444	381	406
Llandudno	738	415	373

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

	1979		
Employment office area	*January*	*July*	*September*
Amlwch	427	381	357
Holyhead	1,118	1,196	1,073
Llangefni	671	595	591
Beaumaris	263	203	218
Pwllheli	621	372	378
Penygroes	238	196	202
Porthmadog	417	275	309
Caernarfon	923	756	745
Bangor	879	996	908
Bethesda	212	165	161
Conwy	507	532	424
Llanrwst*	216	127	135
Blaenau Ffestiniog	300	170	159
Barmouth	259	114	135
Machynlleth*	156	106	115
Llangollen*	434	307	288
Llandudno	661	331	367

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

	1980		
Employment office area	*January*	*July*	*September*
Amlwch	394	435	497
Holyhead	1,145	1,368	1,330
Llangefni	666	605	700
Beaumaris	249	218	230
Pwllheli	589	437	520
Penygroes	225	230	256
Porthmadog	515	293	355
Caernarfon	766	1,176	1,216
Bangor	871	1,144	1,167
Bethesda	181	207	214
Conwy	510	564	562
Llanrwst*	218	166	190
Blaenau Ffestiniog	282	216	233
Barmouth	268	188	219
Machynlleth*	137	122	132
Llangollen*	368	343	396
Llandudno	665	369	465

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

Employment office area	1981 January	July	September
Amlwch	598	634	690
Holyhead	1,431	1,623	1,753
Llangefni	918	1,019	1,073
Beaumaris	331	346	386
Pwllheli	837	547	620
Penygroes	330	374	419
Porthmadog	614	390	464
Caernarfon	1,473	1,438	1,502
Bangor	1,284	1,452	1,625
Bethesda	282	309	319
Conwy	695	694	818
Llanrwst*	325	284	324
Blaenau Ffestiniog	359	312	348
Barmouth	398	328	327
Machynlleth*	193	185	215
Llangollen*	512	572	628
Llandudno	807	582	649

* Part only in Gwynedd.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

Employment office area	1982 January	July	September
Amlwch	683	674	695
Holyhead	1,898	1,847	1,921
Llangefni	1,205	1,056	1,136
Beaumaris	404	338	335
Pwllheli	1,011	662	744
Penygroes	436	399	468
Porthmadog	683	418	497
Caernarfon	1,700	1,642	1,679
Bangor	1,607	1,542	1,855
Bethesda	358	368	318
Conwy	882	840	815
Llanrwst*	439	304	304
Blaenau Ffestiniog	406	330	347
Barmouth	482	387	389
Machynlleth*	264	245	308
Llangollen*	708	604	651
Llandudno	1,049	631	739

* Part only in Gwynedd.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

Employment office area	1983 January	July	September
Amlwch	995	899	1,009
Holyhead	2,243	1,943	2,153
Llangefni	686	605	660
Beaumaris	623	569	590
Pwllheli	910	612	625
Penygroes	514	468	491
Porthmadog	760	429	495
Caernarfon	1,966	1,651	1,759
Bangor	1,264	1,183	1,233
Bethesda	368	327	316
Conwy	908	762	779
Llanrwst*	383	252	270
Blaenau Ffestiniog	407	299	319
Barmouth	524	395	410
Machynlleth*	307	225	237
Llangollen*	725	655	708
Llandudno	1,175	752	835

* Part only in Gwynedd.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

Employment office area	1984 January	July	September
Amlwch	738	748	835
Holyhead	2,029	1,883	2,116
Llangefni	1,056	1,004	1,126
Beaumaris	697	651	731
Pwllheli	928	623	861
Penygroes	489	424	476
Porthmadog	668	437	569
Caernarfon	1,864	1,688	1,835
Bangor	1,569	1,665	1,833
Bethesda	489	†	†
Conwy	954	859	949
Llanrwst*	371	261	290
Blaenau Ffestiniog	401	338	388
Barmouth	537	473	537
Machynlleth*	269	252	284
Llangollen*	749	672	750
Llandudno	1,177	841	964

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

Employment office area	1985 January
Amlwch	818
Holyhead	2,114
Llangefni	1,203
Beaumaris	726
Pwllheli	1,079
Penygroes	578
Porthmadog	641
Caernarfon	2,044
Bangor	1,826
Bethesda	†
Conwy	1,074
Llanrwst*	422
Blaenau Ffestiniog	445
Barmouth	726
Machynlleth*	316
Llangollen*	812
Llandudno	1,335

* Part only in Gwynedd.

† Figures now included in Bangor.

Up to October 1982 figures are registrant based, after that date they are claimant based.

In June 1985 the production of figures aggregated by Jobcentre area, which were defined in terms of post code sectors, ceased.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating for September the average unemployment rate for all development areas and assisted areas, respectively, in Wales, and if he will list those travel-to-work areas within ordinary assisted areas whose unemployment rate is higher than those of development areas.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 12 September 1985 the number of claimants unemployed in development areas and intermediate areas in Wales totalled 74,479 and 97,956 respectively, giving rates of 19·8 per cent. and 17·0 per cent.; there were two travel-to-work areas with intermediate area status whose rates were higher than the average rate for the development areas, Fishguard (21·9 per cent.) and Bangor and Caernarfon (19·9 per cent.).

SCOTLAND

Drinking Water

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those water supply districts where aluminium levels in drinking water exceed 0·2 mg/litre on the basis of a three-monthly average and the maximum recorded levels in each case.

Mr. Ancram: The water supply districts in Scotland where aluminium levels currently exceed 0·2 mg/litre on a three-monthly average are as follows:-

Borders Region
- Roxburgh, part of Ettrick and Lauderdale
- Galashiels, Melrose, Earlston
- West Berwickshire

Central Region
- Bannockburn, Plean
- Bonnybridge, Haggs, Camelon
- West Stirlingshire
- Alloa
- Kirkintilloch (part), Lenzie

Dumfries and Galloway Region
- Wigtown District
- Castle Douglas (part), Dalbeattie, New Galloway
- Corsock, Kirkpatrick Durham, Crocketford
- Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse
- New Abbey

Fife Region
- Cupar

Grampian Region
- Elgin, part of Moray
- Keith
- Buckie
- Stonehaven, parts of Kincardine and Deeside

Highland Region
- Black Isle, Easter Ross

Strathclyde Region
- West Kilbride
- Parts of Hamilton, East Kilbride, Clydesdale, Motherwell and Monklands Districts
- Howwood, Johnstone, Kilbarchan, Elderslie, Paisley
- Dumbarton
- Duntocher, Dalmuir
- Port Glasgow, Langbank
- Gourock
- Greenock
- Inverkip, Wemyss Bay
- Skelmorlie
- Ardrossan
- Irvine, Kilwinning, Saltcoats, Stevenston
- Giffnock, Newton Mearns, Whitecraigs
- Dunlop, Lugton
- Girvan, Ballantrae, Barr, Pimwhar
- Cumnock and Doon Valley District
- Kyle and Carrick District
- Ayr, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Prestwick, Troon
- Lochwinnoch, Bridge of Weir, Kilmacolm
- Kilmarnock
- Kilbirnie
- Fairlie, Hunterston, Cumbrae
- Tarbert
- Inveraray, Bridge of Douglas
- Furnace, Minard
- Ardrishaig, Lochgilphead
- Tighnabruaich
- Muasdale
- Clachan
- Carradale
- Campbeltown
- Rothesay, Port Bannatyne (Bute)
- Tobermory (Mull)
- Bruichladdich, Port Charlotte (Islay)
- Bowmore, Port Ellen (Islay)

Tayside Region
- Kirkmichael

Orkney Islands
- Orkney Mainland South, South Ronaldsay
- Kirkwall
- Orkney Mainland North
- Westray
- Sanday

Shetland Islands
- Cullivoe
- Bressay
- Aith
- Walls
- Reawick, Skeld
- Sandness

Detailed information on maximum recorded levels is not collected centrally. Action is being taken to reduce aluminium levels in most of the districts listed above.

Generic Medicines

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the quality controls on imported generic medicines; if he will make a statement on the recent discussions between his Chief Pharmacist, Mr Graham Calder and representatives of the medical profession on quality controls for imported generic medicines; and whether, in his further consideration of the Greenfield report, he has examined proposals to extend the patent life of existing or future drugs, as a means to protecting research.

Mr. John MacKay : Yes. Generic medicines, including imported ones, are required to meet the same standards of safety, quality and efficacy as branded products. There have been no discussions this year between the Chief Pharmacist and the medical profession on this topic. The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry have submitted a paper to the Government proposing an extension of the patent life for pharmaceutical products and this is being considered.

Forestry Commission (Regional Advisory Committees)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply of 15 May 1985, *Official Report*, column *144*, which organisations nominated the regional advisory committee members appointed primarily to cover the environmental interest; and on what date their nominations were received.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Name	*Nominating Organisation(s)*	*Nomination Received*
Dr. H. M. T. Frankland	Nature Conservancy Council	26 August 1983
Mr. H. W. Mackworth-Praed	Nature Conservancy Council	26 August 1983
Mr. I. Mercer	Countryside Commission	29 July 1983
Mr. J. M. Harrop	Nature Conservancy Council	26 August 1983
	Countryside Commission	29 July 1983
Mr. J. Grant	Countryside Commission for Scotland	27 July 1983
Mr. B. S. Brookes	Countryside Commission for Scotland	27 July 1983
Dr. R. Aitken	Countryside Commission for Scotland	27 July 1983

Re-Chem Plants

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if in view of the destruction of the incinerator stack at the Re-Chem plant in Bonnybridge and the concern about possible emissions from the chimney stack on the health of residents in the Denny and Bonnybridge areas, he will publish information about measurements made for metal and chlorinated organic compound in the combustion products and gases of that chimney; and if he will provide the results of any investigation.

Mr. Ancram: I understand there is no immediate intention to dismantle the stack. Samples of the deposits in the stack have been taken by my inspectors for analyses; the results are not yet available but I shall publish them in due course.

West of Scotland Agricultural College

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed closure of veterinary investigation facilities by the West of Scotland agricultural college.

Mr. Younger: The veterinary investigation facilities provided by the West of Scotland Agricultural College are part of the college's advisory services to the agricultural industry in their area.

My Department will shortly be issuing a consultation paper on the agricultural advisory services in Scotland. Careful consideration will be given to the responses to that document, including those relating to the veterinary investigation service. Meantime no proposals have been made for closure of facilities currently provided.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the percentage reduction on net public expenditure on housing planned for 1985-86 compared to 1978-79 and 1979-80, respectively.

Sir George Young: Planned net expenditure on housing for 1985-86 is £2,290 million, a reduction of 36 per cent. since 1978-79 and 49 per cent. since 1979-80. This comparison does not, however, take into account the very large expenditure by the Department of Health and Social Security on housing benefit or the substantial volume of capital receipts on which local authorities have been able to draw since 1981 in order to increase their spending power.

Housing Investment Programme (Walsall)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State ior the Environment if he will allocate additional resources to Walsall district council under the housing investment programme for house building and modernisation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No decisions have yet been taken about the level of housing resources to be allocated to individual councils for 1986-87. However, once the allocations have been made, it will be for each council to determine its own investment priorities within the resources available.

Birtenshaw Farm, Bolton

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken by him of objections on traffic grounds by local residents to the proposed development at Birtenshaw farm, Bolton, during the appeal procedure.

Mr. Tracey: Full account was taken of all the evidence reported by the inspector who held the local inquiry into this appeal, including that relating to objections on traffic grounds by local residents.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Thompson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the local authority associations on the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has been consulting the local authority associations on the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 throughout 1985, both in the consultative council on local government finance and its official-level grants working group. The last meeting of the consultative council was on 21 October.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the plans for privatisation of each of the water authorities; and when privatisation is likely to proceed.

Mr. John Patten: We have received 42 responses to the discussion paper issued in April. Apart from the responses of the ten water authorities and the Water Authorities Association, these include five others from the water industry, 13 from outside associations, and responses from one London borough council, five district councils, the Countryside Commission and four individuals.

The Government are considering the possibilities and a statement will be made in due course.

Lifts (Emergency Telephones)

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *98*, if he will give the reasons for his decision not to make it a general requirement that lifts in buildings should contain emergency telephones which can be used by people wearing hearing aids; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to make such a requirement because adequate arrangements already exist through licences granted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for the running of branch communications systems, to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member on 2 July at column *98*.

Homes Insulation Scheme

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which have applied for an additional allocation from the homes insulation scheme reserve; and what proportion of the total funds has now been allocated.

Sir George Young: To date the following local authorities have applied for additional allocations from the homes insulation scheme.

NORTHERN
- Langbaurgh
- Middlesbrough
- Stockton-on-Tees
- Tynedale

YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE
- Beverley
- Cleethorpes
- East Yorkshire
- Glanford
- Holderness
- Scunthorpe
- Hambleton
- Scarborough
- Selby
- Barnsley
- Doncaster
- Sheffield*
- Bradford
- Calderdale*
- Kirklees*
- Wakefield

EAST MIDLANDS
- Amber Valley
- Erewash*
- North-East Derbyshire
- West Derbyshire
- Blaby
- Charnwood
- Melton
- North West Leicestershire
- Oadby and Wigston
- North Kesteven
- West Lindsey
- Corby
- Kettering
- Northampton
- Wellingborough
- Ashfield
- Bassetlaw
- Broxtowe
- Gedling
- Mansfield*
- Newark
- Nottingham
- South Northamptonshire

EASTERN
- Luton
- North Bedfordshire
- South Bedfordshire
- Mid Bedfordshire
- Chiltern
- South Bucks
- Wycombe*
- Fenland
- Basildon
- Brentwood
- Castle Point
- Colchester
- Harlow
- Maldon
- Southend on Sea
- Tendring
- Uttlesford
- Broxbourne
- Dacorum
- St. Albans
- Stevenage
- Welwyn Hatfield
- Breckland
- Broadland
- Great Yarmouth
- Norwich
- South Norfolk
- Babergh*
- Forest Heath
- Ipswich*
- Mid Suffolk
- St. Edmundsbury
- Suffolk Coastal
- Waveney
- North Hertfordshire

GREATER LONDON
- Bromley
- Ealing
- Havering*
- Lambeth
- Redbridge*

SOUTH EASTERN
- Bracknell
- Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham*
- Eastbourne
- Rother
- Wealden
- Basingstoke and Deane
- East Hampshire*
- Eastleigh
- Fareham
- Havant*
- New Forest

SOUTH EASTERN
- Southampton
- Test Valley
- Winchester
- Medina
- Ashford
- Canterbury
- Dartford
- Dover*
- Gillingham*
- Maidstone
- Sevenoaks
- Thanet
- Tunbridge Wells
- South Oxfordshire
- Vale of White Horses
- West Oxfordshire*
- Elmbridge
- Epsom and Ewell
- Guildford
- Mole Valley
- Reigate and Banstead
- Runnymede
- Spelthorne
- Surrey Heath
- Waverley*
- Woking
- Adur
- Arun
- Chichester
- Horsham
- Mid-Sussex
- Worthing

SOUTH WEST
- Woodspring*
- Carrick*
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Torridge
- Christchurch
- North Dorset*
- Poole*
- West Dorset*
- Wimborne
- Stroud*
- Taunton Deane
- Kennet

WEST MIDLANDS

Bromsgrove
Hereford
Leominster
Malvern Hills
Redditch
Worcester

WEST MIDLANDS
Wychavon
Wyre Forest
Bridgnorth
Shrewsbury and Atcham
South Shropshire
The Wrekin
Cannock Chase
Lichfield
Newcastle under Lyme*
South Staffordshire
Nuneaton and Bedworth*
Stratford on Avon*
Warwick
Coventry*
Dudley
Sandwell*

NORTH WEST
Congleton
Crewe and Nantwich
Ellesmere Port and Neston
Halton
Warrington
South Lakeland
Fylde*
Hyndburn
Rossendale*
Wyre
Bolton
Rochdale
Bury*
Salford*
Wigan
Sefton

*These authorities have not received any additional allocation as a result of applications they have made. They have however been invited to re-apply when it is clearer that their existing allocations will soon be exhausted.

Some 53 per cent. of the reserve has been allocated.

Sand and Gravel

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage the extraction of sand and gravel from the sea bed and estuaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: It remains the Government's policy to encourage the use of marine dredged aggregates wherever this is possible without unacceptable damage to sea fisheries or risk of coastal erosion.

Radioactivity

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those contracts undertaken or being undertaken by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, involving monitoring of radioactivity in the environment; in what areas such investigations are taking place; and when he intends to publish those results.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following contracts have been placed with the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in recent years:

By the Department of the Environment
Radionuclides in Terrestrial Ecosystems.
Concentration and Spatial Distribution of Radionuclides in Grazed and Ungrazed Saltmarshes.
Inland Transfer of Radionuclides by Birds feeding in the Estuaries and Saltmarshes at Ravenglass.
Radionuclides in contrasting types of Coastal Pastures and taken up by individual plant species in West Cumbria.
Incorporation of Radionuclides by Sheep grazing on an Estuarine Saltmarsh.
Procedure developed and used for the measurement of Alpha and Gamma Emmers in Environmental Materials.
The Distribution and Dynamics of Radionuclides in the Terrestrial Environment.
Radionuclides in Bird Tissues, their Foods and Feeding Areas near Ravenglass.
Sheep Grazing Studies.
Radiochemical Technical Development Studies.

The results of the first six projects listed above have already been published. The results of the remaining projects will be published in the course of the next two years as soon as the work has been completed.

By the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Radionuclides distribution within a grazed meadow.
Analysis of environmental data (1979-1981.
Statistical Analysis of West Cumbria milk data.
Cumbria sheep feeding studies.

The results of the first three projects listed above have already been published. The results of the remaining project will be published as soon as the work is completed in 1986.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which radioactive isotopes or elements have been detected in or around the Irish Sea coast of Cumbria in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am informed that radionuclides of the following elements have been detected as a result of routine monitoring undertaken between 1980 and 1983 (complete information is not yet available for 1984):

Americium, Antimony, Argon, Caesium, Carbon, Cerium, Cobalt, Curium, Europium, Hydrogen (as Tritium), Iodine, Krypton, Manganese, Niobium, Plutonium, Ruthenium, Silver, Strontium, Technetium, Zinc and Zirconium.

St. Barnabas Community Centre

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what reply he has sent to St. Paul's community association in relation to a letter about the St. Barnabas community centre sent to him on 23 August.

Sir George Young: I wrote to the St. Paul's community association on 25 September. In view of the difficulties that have arisen over the St. Barnabas community centre, which was built by Avon county council with financial assistance from the Government's urban programme, I have offered a further attempt to mediate in this matter.

Water Authorities (Official Communications)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 26 July, *Official Report*, column 889, what decision he has reached about publishing official communications with regional water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Water information letters are not public documents and are therefore not usually published. They are private correspondence between the Department and chief executives of the regional water authorities.

Water

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those water authorities which do not fulfil the requirements of the European Economic

Community directive on drinking water in respect of *(a)* aluminium, *(b)* iron, *(c)* manganese, *(d)* lead, *(e)* nitrates and *(f)* fertilisers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following water authorities have one or more water supply areas in which the relevant limit in the EC Drinking Water Directive is exceeded at present:

Aluminium
- Northumbrian
- North West
- Severn-Trent
- South West
- Yorkshire

Manganese
- Anglian
- Northumbrian
- North West
- Severn-Trent
- South West
- Yorkshire

Nitrate
- Anglian
- Severn-Trent
- Yorkshire

Iron
- Anglian
- North West
- Severn-Trent
- South West
- Yorkshire

Lead
- Anglian
- Northumbrian
- North West
- Severn-Trent
- Yorkshire

Fertilisers
- There is no reference to fertilisers in the Directive.

This answer does not cover the position in statutory water companies.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the date when each water authority is expected to comply fully with the European Economic Community directive on drinking water.

Mrs. Rumbold: The dates by which the last improvements are due to be completed to comply with the directive are as follows:

	Date
Anglian	1989
Northumbrian	1988
North West	1990
Severn-Trent	1990 (except for two supply areas 1995)
Southern	Already complying
South West	1991
Thames	1987
Wessex	Already complying
Yorkshire	Applications still being considered

This answer does not cover the position in statutory water companies.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the time limits he has imposed, and on which water authorities, in respect of the nitrate content of drinking water.

Mrs. Rumbold: Derogations granted to Anglian and Severn-Trent water authorities allowing them to exceed in some of their supplies the nitrate limit set in the EC drinking water directive will be reviewed in three years.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what respect he has asked the European Economic Community to review the pesticide parameters for drinking water.

Mrs. Rumbold: The pesticide parameter specifies the same limit for every pesticide, herbicide and fungicide, and a total figure for all such substances. This is scientifically unsound as these substances vary enormously in toxicity. The Government will therefore be requesting a review which takes account of these variations and the recent changes in pesticide composition. In addition, methods of analysis are not available to identify many pesticides at 0·1 parts per million, and in these cases the directive limit is not practical.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which water authorities supply drinking water with pesticides in them; what are the pesticides; what is their source; and what is the quantity involved.

Mrs. Rumbold: If sophisticated analytical methods now becoming available are used it is possible to detect traces of pesticides in most water supplies down to one tenth of a part per million or even less. There are several hundred pesticides authorised for use in agriculture and general weed control as well as more specialised activities such as wood treatment. Medical advisers have confirmed that traces of pesticides detected in routine sampling are well below any known acceptable daily intake.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those private water suppliers which do not fulfil the requirements of the European Economic Community directive on drinking water in respect of *(a)* aluminium, *(b)* iron, *(c)* managanese, *(d)* lead, *(e)* nitrates and *(f)* fertilisers.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why private water suppliers are to be allowed to supply drinking water of an inferior quality to that provided by public water authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is not so. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for deciding whether a private water supply is satisfactory.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which private water suppliers serve fewer than 500 people.

Mrs. Rumbold: About 1 per cent. of the population regularly drink water from private supplies. There are known to be about 80,000 such supplies in the United Kingdom mostly in rural areas serving single properties. About 200 private supplies regularly serve more than 500 people.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will detail the programme of remedial work that is to be undertaken by each water authority in order to improve the quality of drinking water; and if he will state the cost;

(2) what are the further programmes of action that he has identified as being needed to improve the quality of drinking water.

Mrs. Rumbold: Programmes of action relate principally to the lead, aluminium, microbiological and iron parameters of EC drinking water directive. For lead

the pH level is being raised or orthophosphate added to the water to reduce plumbosolvency (Anglian, Northumbrian North West, Severn-Trent, Yorkshire). When inefficient treatment causes the aluminium limit to be exceeded, treatment works are being improved or rebuilt (Northumbrian, North West, Severn-Trent, South West, Yorkshire). Marginal failures to meet microbiological standards are being met by more sophisticated disinfection, supplementary chlorination, or replacement or repair of service reservoirs (South West, Yorkshire). Where high iron concentrations are due to corroded cast iron mains, the pipes are being scraped, flushed and relined, or replaced (Severn-Trent).

Many of these programmes of action are already under way. Further details and costs may be obtained from the water authorities.

This answer does not cover programmes of remedial work being undertaken by statutory water companies.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which water supplies fall short of the European Economic Community directive in respect of microbiological standards; by how much each supply falls short of the European Economic Community standard; how many people are supplied by each supplier; and what action is being taken in each case to improve standards.

Mrs. Rumbold: Ninety water supply areas fall marginally short of the EC drinking water directive's microbiological standards at present.

	Number of supply areas	*People supplied*
South West water authority	22	200,000
Yorkshire water authority	68	*750,000

* Approximately.

In the South West, supplementary chlorination is being provided and this will be complete in 1987. In Yorkshire more sophisticated chlorination equipment is being installed at some small spring sources and some service reservoirs are being replaced or repaired over the next few years.

Private House Building (London)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to stimulate private sector house building in London.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Housebuilding starts in Greater London rose by more than 52 per cent. between 1979 and 1984 as compared with less than 11 per cent. for England. In two areas, docklands and Thamesmead, there has been substantial growth.

Evidence from the London and South East regional planning conference is that there is a significant amount of housing land available in London. We have taken steps to maximise the release of this land for building. Land registers highlight the under-use of land held by public bodies, and we have urged public bodies to sell land on a profit-sharing basis to encourage development.

Urban development grant is available for private house building schemes which address the problems of deprived urban areas and which would not go ahead without grant.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas of Britain having the ten highest and the ten lowest background soil levels of polychlorinated biphenyls and 2,3,7,8 tetrachlorodibenzodioxin.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am not aware of any comprehensive survey of soil levels of PCBs or of 2,3,7,8 tetrachlorodibenzodioxin in Britain. Hence there is no satisfactory basis on which to single out the ten highest and the ten lowest concentrations of these chemicals in soil.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which agencies are responsible for setting permitted levels for human exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzodioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans in milk, fat, soil and drinking water and with what frequency these levels are reviewed.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Agriculture and Health Departments are responsible for coordinating the monitoring of levels of contaminants in food, including milk and animal fat. There are no specified maximum permitted levels for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polychlorinated dibenzodioxins (PCDDs) or polychlorinated dibenzofurans (PCDFs) in foodstuffs.

Permitted levels of these substances in soil are not set in the United Kingdom. The interdepartmental committee on the redevelopment of contaminated land advises on the problems of redeveloping contaminated sites generally.

A maximum allowable concentration for PCBs in drinking water (0·1 microgram per litre) is set by the EEC Directive 80/778/EEC which came into force in July this year. The Department of the Environment is responsible for implementing this directive in the United Kingdom but any review of the levels set by the Directive is a matter for the European Commission. There are no specified maximum allowable levels for PCDDs or PCDFs in drinking water.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those districts in which domestic refuse incinerators have been tested for the polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxin and furan content of flue gases; what was the temperature of combustion in each case; on which dates or with what frequency the tests have been made; and what were the concentrations and isomers of any polychlorinated dibenzodioxins or polychlorinated dibenzofurans detected.

Mrs. Rumbold: A programme of investigation is currently under way, based on analysis of stack emissions, initially from municipal waste incinerators located in Gateshead, Bristol, Coventry, Wolverhampton and Sheffield. When the investigation has been completed and the results assessed, a report will be published. It is expected that this will be in the latter half of 1986. In addition, tests have been carried out on the Edmonton incinerator on behalf of the Greater London council.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations he issues as to the technical detail of incinerators for the incineration of polychlorinated biphenyls and other toxic waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: General advice on the appropriate conditions for incineration of "PCB" wastes has been

given in DOE Waste Management Paper No. 6. Technical advice is also available from Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if flue gases from combustion plants and industrial premises other than municipal refuse incinerators have been tested for polychlorinated dibenzodioxins, polychlorinated biphenyls and polychlorinated dibenzofurans content.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate has carried out a number of such tests at registered chemical incineration works. Tests have also been carried out at various other installations.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures exist for the regular or continuous monitoring of the polychlorinated biphenyl, polychlorinated dibenzodioxin and polychlorinated dibenzofuran content of flue gas emissions from combustion plants, industrial premises and municipal refuse incinerators; and if he plans any changes in these arrangements.

Mrs. Rumbold: Spot sampling is carried out by Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate in addition to monitoring checks by the operators themselves. Research to establish continuous monitoring techniques for emissions from chemical incineration works has been commissioned from the Harwell laboratory. Research to develop sampling techniques for application to municipal waste incinerators has been commissioned from the Warren Spring laboratory.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for all those United Kingdom incinerators licensed to burn polychlorinated biphenyls, the maximum sustainable temperature for each incinerator.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are three commercially available high-temperature incinerators licensed to burn polychlorinated biphenyls in the United Kingdom. Only two are currently being operated for the combustion of PCBs. The temperature of each incinerator varies according to its construction materials and operating practices. The maximum refractory temperature is about 1200°C with flame temperature several hundred degrees higher. Information of the kind sought is not centrally available for the various "in-house" facilities licensed to burn waste of this type.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the maximum daily throughput of each United Kingdom incinerator licensed to burn polychlorinated biphenyls.

Mrs. Rumbold: None. It would be for waste disposal authorities in the first instance to consider whether there should be any such limit in the terms of the licence issued by them. However, control over gaseous emissions from such premises is a matter for Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total tonnage of polychlorinated biphenyl materials imported into the United Kingdom for destruction during each of the past 10 years; and what proportion of the total was incinerated at each licensed site.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what he estimates will be the total tonnage and likely sources of polychlorinated biphenyls likely to require destruction in the United Kingdom during each of the next 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is impossible to estimate reliably on an annual basis over the next 10 years the total tonnage of polychlorinated biphenyls likely to require destruction in the United Kingdom. However the sources of PCBs are likely in the main to be redundant electrical transformers and capacitors.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current position regarding the import into the United Kingdom of polychlorinated biphenyl materials for incineration; and if he will list the countries of origin and the quantities of such material.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department are not aware of any imports of polychlorinated biphenyl materials for incineration in the United Kingdom within the last six months.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by tonnes of material per six month period, the quantity of hazardous wastes incinerated at registered plants in the United Kingdom between January 1980 and June 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information in the form requested is not available.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the existing code of practice for polychlorinated biphenyl disposal, as outlined in section 8 of Waste Management Paper No. 6, provides for adequate furnace residence times and temperatures to guarantee the complete destruction of polychlorinated biphenyls.

Mrs. Rumbold: Trials supervised by Her Majesty's industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate have been carried out since the publication of Waste Management Paper No. 6 on all commercially available high-temperature incineration plants in the United Kingdom. These plants have demonstrated a destruction efficiency of more than 99·999 per cent., and polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins (PCDDs) and polychlorinated dibenzon-furans (PCDFs) in the emissions have been consistently below the analytical limit of detection.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the progress of current research to assess background levels of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls in soil and groundwater; and what plans he has to extend the existing database.

Mrs. Rumbold: The accurate analysis of polychlorinated dibenzodioxin (PCDDs) and polychlorinated dibenzofuran (PCDF) levels in soil is a difficult and costly procedure. My Department is currently supporting research work to refine the analytical procedure for the extraction, separation and subsequent quantitative determination of these chemicals in soil. Once this has been achieved, soil samples will be analysed from various sites selected to establish the range of background levels

in the United Kingdom. There are no plans to measure background levels of PCDDs or PCDFs in groundwater. In view of the extremely low solubility of these chemicals in water, significant contamination is unlikely and this is not considered an appropriate medium to monitor.

Land Disposal (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which land currently owned by the Greater London council will be disposed of in order to establish a trust fund for making grants to eligible charities.

Mr. Tracey: We expect that some of the property which passes to the London Residuary Body at abolition will be surplus and can be disposed of. It is from the proceeds of these disposals that the trust fund is intended to be established.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) in relation to the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, what will be the effect of the proposed development scheme on the silhouette of the Tower of London as seen from London bridge;

(2) in relation to the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, what studies have been carried out on its visual impact *(a)* when seen from the Royal Observatory and Green park and *(b)* upon the Royal Naval college and the Queen's house; and how will this vista be affected;

(3) in relation to the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, what studies have been undertaken of the impact of the proposals on views along the River Thames; and what are the effects;

(4) in relation to the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, what studies have been done to determine if the proposed structures will be visible from hill tops in north or south London;

(5) if the proposed structures at the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone will be visible from Richmond park.

Sir George Young: London Docklands Development Corporation, which is the local planning and Enterprise Zone authority for the area, has commissioned further studies to supplement the work that the developers have already undertaken on these issues, as part of a wider assessment of the scheme. Final agreement to the development will not be given until the corporation is satisfied on these and other points.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone falls within a preferred office location in the Greater London development plan as approved by the Secretary of State in 1976.

Sir George Young: No. When the Greater London development plan was approved in 1976, the West India docks, of which Canary wharf forms a part, were still open for cargo handling.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the proposals for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone will affect the outstanding office permissions or commitments in central London.

Sir George Young: At this stage, it is not possible to tell.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to arrange for all the surplus accruing from the disposal of Greater London council properties to be distributed to the London boroughs.

Mr. Tracey: In general proceeds from the sale of surplus property will pass to London boroughs or other successor authorities. Some will, however, pass to a charitable trust to be established under section 49 of the Local Government Act 1985.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which functions of the London Residuary Body will be funded during its first year of operation by means of levies on successor bodies and which by means of direct charging.

Mr. Tracey: The main costs to be met by charges will be debt charges, except those in respect of certain mortgages, directly attributable superannuation costs and, subject to decisions by the body in consultation with successor authorities, the costs of any professional and technical services provided by the body. The levy on the boroughs will meet any costs not met from charges.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what Greater London council computers and fixed equipment have been identified for transfer to the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tracey: The Government's proposals for the transfer of all tangible property at abolition were set out in property memorandum No. 2, issued on 3 September 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment who are currently members of the London Residuary Body; and what remuneration or expenses will be received by each in the current financial year.

Mr. Tracey: Sir Godfrey Taylor, Mr. Alan Blakemore CBE, Mr. Jack Esling, Mr. Wallace Mackenzie OBE and Mr. Jack Wolkind CBE were appointed to the London Residuary Body on 12 August 1985, and Councillor Peter Bowness was appointed on 1 October 1985. Remuneration is being paid at the following rates — Sir Godfrey Taylor, £50,000 per annum, Mr. Esling, £18,927 per annum, Mr. Blakemore, Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Wolkind, £12,000 per annum, and Councillor Bowness £6,000 per annum.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for which categories of contracts the London Residuary Body will assume responsibility on the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: All outstanding contractual rights and liabilities of the GLC will be assumed by the London Residuary Body unless transferred to successor authorities by order under section 100 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what will be the role of the London Residuary Body in respect of the Greater London mobility scheme;

(2) what arrangements will be made for the body running the Greater London mobility scheme to monitor and amend the way in which the scheme's computer records are kept in order to ensure that the equal opportunities provisions are maintained and implemented effectively;

(3) what arrangements are being made to safeguard the control systems of the Greater London mobility scheme whilst its operation is managed by the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: Subject to negotiations with the local authority associations, the London Residuary Body may have a temporary role as employers of staff and providers of accommodation and equipment, until permanent arrangements are made. Records and control systems will be the responsibility of the body running the scheme.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total costs of establishing the London Residuary Body's offices in central London.

Mr. Tracey: The costs incurred before the London Residuary Body's appointed day are expected to amount to some £6,000. Costs incurred after that date are a matter for the residuary body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which body will be responsible for the payment of housing benefit to Thamesmead residents while Thamesmead is in the ownership of the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: Bexley and Greenwich councils, the local authorities within whose boundaries Thamesmead falls.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the London Residuary Body will determine rent levels for the housing stock at Thamesmead currently owned by the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: We expect the London Residuary Body to have only temporary responsibility for Thamesmead during which time it will levy current rent levels.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total number of permanent staff directly employed by the London Residuary Body as at 30 September;

(2) what information he has as to how many of the jobs in the London Residuary Body are held by residents of Greater London;

(3) when consultations with the London boroughs will take place concerning the London Residuary Body review of the professional and technical services provided by the Greater London council, as required by paragraph 8(2)*(b)* of schedule 13 to the Local Government Act 1985;

(4) when the London Residuary Body will commence the review of professional and technical services provided by the Greater London council under paragraph 8(2)*(a)* of schedule 13 to the Local Government Act 1985;

(5) what information he has as to how many people from black or other ethnic minority communities are employed by the London Residuary Body and at what grades;

(6) how many women are employed by the London Residuary Body, and at what grades;

(7) in relation to the London Residuary Body's own employment practices, whether personnel are specifically employed to shortlist and appoint staff;

(8) on what basis rents currently set by the Greater London council will be reviewed and varied by the London Residuary Body;

(9) in relation to the London Residuary Body's employment practices, what arrangements there are for advertising posts in the London Residuary Body; and, in particular, in which black and ethnic minority newspapers advertisements are being placed;

(10) whether the London Residuary Body's own employment practices, make provision for maternity and paternity leave;

(11) in relation to the London Residuary Body's own employment practices whether there are clauses in contracts of employment specifying that racial and sexual harassment at work is a disciplinary issue;

(12) whether the post of chief executive in the London Residuary Body was advertised nationally;

(13) what meetings have taken place between the London Residuary Body and the co-ordinating committee, committees of London boroughs and other successor bodies;

(14) what motor vehicles are at the disposal of the London Residuary Body; and what is the total estimated cost in the current financial year;

(15) how many people with disabilities are employed by the London Residuary Body and at what grades;

(16) what is the London Residuary Body's budget for the current financial year with a detailed breakdown of expenditure under different headings;

(17) into what sectional and divisional structure the staff of the London Residuary Body are organised;

(18) if he will list the consultants used by the London Residuary Body to date for staff recruitment and the consultancy fees incurred;

(19) what is the total number of temporary staff directly employed by the London Residuary Body as at 30 September;

(20) as at 30 September, how many Greater London council and former Greater London council employees are working for the London Residuary Body *(a)* on a full-time basis, *(b)* under a dual appointment arrangement, *(c)* under an agency agreement and *(d)* on a shared time basis between the Greater London council and the London Residuary Body;

(21) how much has been spent by the London Residuary Body on hospitality, public relations and personal expenses since its establishment;

(22) when he anticipates that the London Residuary Body will give a provisional estimate of its budget and levy;

(23) whether there are any proposals to relocate the London Residuary Body after 31 March 1986;

(24) if the London Residuary Body keeps a register which indicates the number of homosexual men and women employed;

(25) how many applications were received for the secretarial posts advertised recently for the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tracey: These are all matters for the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long he expects responsibility for Thamesmead to rest with the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: For a short period only.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make an order to effect the transfer of property at Thamesmead currently owned by the Greater London council to the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: By virtue of section 62 of the Local Government Act 1985 all GLC properties will pass at abolition to the London Residuary Body unless they have been transferred elsewhere by order.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to issue a transfer order to effect the transfer of staff currently employed by the Greater London council in connection with Thamesmead to the employ of the London Residuary Body.

Sir George Young: We do not intend to decide the exact means for the transfer of the GLC's Thamesmead staff until the long-term arrangements for the area have been finalised.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it remains his policy to seek the consent of individual mortgagors under the Greater London council's mortgage account before each loan is transferred from the London Residuary Body to any alternative body.

Sir George Young: Yes, so far as voluntary transfers during the life of the residuary body are concerned. Arrangements for the disposal of any assets remaining when the residuary body is wound up are still under consideration.

Waste Disposal (Lond)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many London boroughs have now submitted proposals for practical arrangements for transfer of waste disposal functions; and what proportion of London's population they represent.

Mrs. Rumbold: Six London boroughs and the City of London have submitted practicable proposals for two voluntary groupings for waste disposal operations. In addition, four London boroughs have invited the setting up of a statutory joint authority for their area. Thirteen other boroughs have made various proposals which either have not achieved sufficient support or which do not appear to be satisfactory. In all, authorities representing three quarters of the population of Greater London have made proposals.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial information relating to economy, efficiency and effectiveness he is considering or has considered on the different options for providing waste disposal services in London after 1 April 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: All relevant information available will be taken into account.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement further to his Department's note of guidance on arrangements for co-ordinating licensing control planning and research and development for waste disposal in the London area.

Mrs. Rumbold: No proposals commanding general acceptance have so far been received. Unless the situation changes, it will fall to the Secretary of State to consider the setting up of joint statutory arrangements in pursuance of section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the likely costs to the London borough of Newham of the waste disposal service after 1 April 1986 compared with that borough's present contribution to the service provided by the Greater London council.

Mrs. Rumbold: The costs of waste disposal in any London borough after the abolition of the Greater London council will depend on the policies and practices of the authorities which become responsible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many London borough councils submitted proposals for the future of the waste disposal service in Greater London by his Department's deadline of 30 September; how many have submitted proposals since that date; and how many of the submissions made indicated unqualified support for his Department's proposals for seven voluntary groupings.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twenty three London boroughs and the City of London submitted proposals either before or shortly after 30 September. Most of the submissions did not address themselves to the question whether there should be seven voluntary groupings in London.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to indicate what the arrangements for waste disposal in London will be after 1 April 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: This would be premature as under the terms of section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985, the Secretary of State cannot take a final and complete view on the arrangements to be made until 15 November 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings will result from his proposals to split London's waste disposal service into seven groups.

Mrs. Rumbold: Savings resulting from the abolition of the Greater London council, on waste disposal as on other functions, will depend on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which successor authorities carry them out.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish studies on the risks attendant in sea dumping and nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: I assume the hon. Member refers to the study of best practicable environmental options for the management of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes which my Department is currently undertaking. I hope to publish the report of the study early next year.

London Ecology Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current situation regarding the future of the London Ecology Centre.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will answer this question shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent on office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decoration in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Prior to 1983-84 Departments were not charged separately for office furniture, curtains and carpets, nor for maintenance work undertaken by PSA on their estates.

For 1983-84 and 1984-85 the information for DOE Central is as follows:

	Supplies Items £	*Office Decoration* £
1983-84	*920,658	†
1984-85	*1,123,382	†

Notes:

* Expenditure on supplies, which includes office furniture curtains and carpets, is not separately itemised.

† It is not possible to separate the cost of office decoration from other maintenance work.

The information for the rest of the Department is not readily available.

London Co-ordinating Committee

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters the London Co-ordinating Committee *(a)* has considered and advised him on and *(b)* has still to consider.

Mr. Tracey: The co-ordinating committee is under no obligation to offer my right hon. Friend advice, or to inform him of its discussions.

Planning (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional capacity is being created in his Department to handle his responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1985 for issuing strategic planning guidance to the London boroughs; what is the staffing complement of any new unit; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Tracey: I am augmenting my Department's Greater London regional office with a new unit to prepare strategic planning guidance for Greater London. The unit is at present expected to comprise 7 people, with an annual staff and accommodation cost of about £160,000; it will be able to draw upon support from elsewhere in the Department; and consultants may be employed on particular tasks. The cost of these additional contributions cannot be estimated at this stage.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue his first strategic planning guidance to the London boroughs; whether it will be London-wide; and what issues it will cover.

Mr. Tracey: The timing and content of strategic guidance will be decided in the light of consultation with the joint planning committee for Greater London when that is established and with other bodies including the London and South East Regional Planning Conference.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to the Central Office of Information as to where, after 1 April 1986, overseas visitors wishing to explore and discuss current planning developments in Greater London will be directed.

Mr. Tracey: None. My Department is, however, always willing to give advice.

Rates (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what options he has considered in order to phase out the proposed London rate equalisation scheme after 1986-87;

(2) if he will ensure that the proposed extended London rate equalisation scheme will not be phased out in such a way that results in a greater rate burden being placed upon London's inner city partnership areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has considered no proposal to phase out the London-wide rate equalisation scheme (LRES) after 1986-87. The London Boroughs Association has suggested that the overall level of the extended scheme should be reduced systematically over a run of years after 1986-87, to reflect potential savings compared to the present level of expenditure by the GLC. My right hon. Friend has accepted in principle that this might be appropriate, but any decisions about the LRES pool in future would be subject to the outcome of the statutory consultations on the scheme for each financial year.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the percentage of houses built on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land during 1984-85 which were priced at under £40,000;

(2) what information he has as to the average price for a three-bedroom house in docklands in 1984-85.

Sir George Young: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as the information is available.

Unitary Development Plans

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the regulations governing the preparation of unitary development plans will be issued.

Mr. Tracey: Regulations will be made before the first order is made under section 4 of the Local Government Act 1985 bringing into force in any area schedule 1 of the Act which requires the preparation of unitary development plans.

Radioactive Mud (Disposal)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment where the radioactive Windscale mud deposited by Greenpeace outside the Department of the Environment was disposed of; what route it took; what

tests and precautions took place; and whether any consultations were made with the respective local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: Exhaustive tests indicated that the material deposited by Greenpeace outside the Department of the Environment on 26 February 1985 was not radioactive waste and that it presented no hazard to the public or to those handling it. It was therefore disposed of by a private waste disposal contractor who was responsible for arranging for its transport and burial at a commercial landfill site. There was no occasion for consultations with local authorities.

County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what future uses of County hall have been considered by his Department.

Mr. Tracey: It will be for the London Residuary Body to consider the future use of County hall.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 22 October 1985

PRIME MINISTER

General Belgrano

Q8. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what recommendations of the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on the circumstances of the sinking of the General Belgrano have now been implemented by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the hon. Member on 24 July, the Government will respond in the normal way to this report. It would be wrong of me to anticipate our reply, which will be published shortly.

Queen's Speech (Implementation)

Q12. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister which matters on which Government action was promised in the Queen's Speech have not yet been brought to a conclusion.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Our legislative programme is close to a successful conclusion. We have not proceeded with two measures in connection with the review of Crown court sentences and corporal punishment in schools. We have pursued with vigour our aims in the fields of foreign affairs, defence and the economy, as announced in the Gracious Speech. Where these have not been of a nature to be brought to a conclusion within a fixed time, action continues.

Middle East

Q60. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her visits to the middle east during the summer recess.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 21 October at column 10.

EC (Treaty of Union)

Q95. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if a date has yet been fixed for the special meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss the draft treaty of European union; and if she will make a statement

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The inter-governmental conference on the future development of the European Community met on 9 September and again this week.

Third World (Aid)

Q106. **Miss Maynard** asked the Prime Minister what has been the United Kingdom's level of aid to the Third world in each of the past six years.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Gross public expenditure on overseas aid for the last six calendar years has been as follows:

	£ million
1979	939
1980	966
1981	1,151
1982	1,085
1983	1,173
1984	1,311

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in the Bahamas.

Teachers (Scotland)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on Government policy concerning the Scottish teachers' pay dispute.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister what are the respective responsibilities of *(a)* departmental legal advisers and *(b)* the Law Officers of the Crown for advising whether draft regulations accord with ministerial powers under primary legislation.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The primary responsibility for advising a Minister on whether subordinate legislation which he proposes to make would be intra vires rests with his departmental legal advisers, or if his Department does not have its own legal staff, with the Treasury Solicitor. In appropriate cases a second opinion may be sought from Treasury Counsel or other counsel nominated by the Attorney-General. However, the Attorney-General—or the Lord Advocate for questions involving the law of Scotland—is the Government's principal legal adviser, and departmental advisers are aware that they should consult the Law Officers in good time before the Government are committed to critical decisions involving legal considerations and in particular when a Department's legal adviser is in doubt concerning the vires of proposed subordinate legislation.

TRANSPORT

Road Planning

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport when a decision will be made on Warwickshire county council's plan to use part of the M45 motorway for a bypass for the village of Dunchurch.

Mrs. Chalker: I am awaiting Warwickshire county council's detailed proposals. When these have been received they will be carefully considered. I will announce my decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans for increasing the number of lanes on the M6 motorway between its junction with the M1 and junction 4.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no plans for increasing the number of lanes on this length of the M6.

M25 (Defects)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the arrangements for meeting the cost of rectification of defects which have occurred in the concrete carriageway of the Reigate to Leatherhead section of the M25.

Mrs. Chalker: Under the provisions of the contract, it is for the Department's consulting engineers, W. S. Atkins and Partners, who are the engineer for the contract, to determine where the responsibility lies. That determination will be binding unless referred to arbitration by the Department or the contractor.

I have no contractual powers to impose a timetable on the engineer to produce his determination, although I have explained I would like it to be dealt with expeditiously. This is, however, a complex technical matter which requires thorough investigation and careful consideration. I will inform my hon. Friend of the engineer's determination when it is issued.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Overseas Students (Language Courses)

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of polytechnics and colleges of further education are charging the recommended fees for English as a foreign language course run by the public sector for overseas students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Educational and Professional Qualifications

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the percentage of residents in England without degrees or professional qualifications.

Mr. Brooke: The percentage of residents in England, aged 18 and over, without degrees, professional or other higher education qualifications was 90·3 according to the 1981 census of population.

Universities (Grants)

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list grants made available to universities in Great Britain in the financial year 1984-85, on the advice of the University Grants Committee and of the computer board.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is as follows:

1984-85

	Grants to Universities and Colleges, etc. for Recurrent Expenditure				
	General Purpose	*Restructuring**	*Overseas Research Student Fees Support Scheme*	*Total Subhead A1*	*Computers Subhead B2*
	£	£	£	£	£
Aston University	14,473,646	3,785,602	29,869	18,289,117	141,628
Bath University¶	12,594,543	235,658	66,856	12,897,057	1,422,087
Birmingham University	36,430,988	2,711,928	59,636	39,202,552	322,955
Bradford University¶	14,672,516	1,970,942	22,386	16,665,844	147,275
Bristol University	28,930,260	1,067,852	31,615	30,029,727	213,947
Brunel University	12,802,376	439,682	24,090	13,266,148	124,963
Cambridge University	41,360,648	—	630,281	41,990,929	509,882
City University	12,086,686	1,038,691	18,487	13,143,864	112,412
Durham University	17,222,910	329,378	22,505	17,574,793	98,403
East Anglia University	14,707,661	854,324	19,944	15,581,929	163,766
Essex University	8,230,335	544,303	40,512	8,815,150	174,842
Exeter University	15,171,863	1,557,708	11,432	16,741,003	122,730
Hull University	14,198,165	754,855	4,162	14,957,182	148,831
Keele University¶	8,465,960	560,136	2,581	9,028,677	112,578
Kent University	10,260,224	834,267	24,963	11,119,454	182,163
Lancaster University	13,259,081	559,510	17,979	13,836,570	185,080
Leeds University¶	41,329,610	732,100	167,236	42,228,946	375,859
Leicester University	17,596,203	277,382	9,780	17,883,365	144,327
Liverpool University	36,931,668	1,638,172	91,212	38,661,052	247,097
London University, including its Colleges and Schools¶	237,531,273	12,664,718	805,334	251,001,325	5,270,764
Loughborough University of Technology	17,632,000	295,375	28,391	17,955,766	191,751
Manchester University	46,292,283	454,030	94,463	46,840,776	2,864,350

	Grants to Universities and Colleges, etc. for Recurrent Expenditure				
	General Purpose	*Restructuring**	*Overseas Research Student Fees Support Scheme*	*Total Subhead A1*	*Computers Subhead B2*
	£	£	£	£	£
Manchester University Institute of Science and Technology	16,143,980	1,345,718	153,041	17,642,739	—
Newcastle upon Tyne University	31,707,830	448,410	82,359	32,238,599	306,195
Nottingham University	27,220,554	198,117	23,810	27,442,481	399,065
Oxford University	42,537,708	243,741	255,758	43,037,207	534,891
Reading University	18,547,599	752,390	40,484	19,340,473	159,383
Salford University	13,303,559	1,748,656	30,697	15,082,912	286,256
Sheffield University	32,331,261	1,229,081	48,401	33,608,743	218,631
Southampton University	24,178,542	388,770	67,203	24,634,515	315,461
Surrey University	12,570,927	1,566,995	29,390	14,167,312	131,451
Sussex University¶	13,751,110	222,465	66,114	14,039,689	107,001
Warwick University	17,014,057	670,350	16,016	17,700,423	212,554
York University	11,307,496	899,845	3,162	12,210,503	103,845
University of Wales, including University Colleges and Institute of Science and Technology¶	72,447,957	3,095,813	74,601	75,618,371	675,723
Aberdeen University	23,339,163	864,811	36,197	24,240,171	283,815
Dundee University	15,610,918	560,696	30,116	16,201,730	99,530
Edinburgh University	46,776,735	933,680	100,456	47,810,871	813,361
Glasgow University	44,730,496	1,934,480	81,114	46,746,090	299,117
Heriot-Watt University	11,476,215	656,361	14,895	12,147,471	114,279
St. Andrews University	12,171,056	113,021	30,621	12,314,698	109,142
Stirling University	8,957,760	722,509	5,162	9,685,431	56,402
Strathclyde University	24,216,196	1,180,695	110,779	25,507,670	239,580
London Business School	2,026,000	70,010	2,331	2,098,341	—
Manchester Business School	1,157,000	45,901	—	1,202,901	20,744
Other payments	†604,982	—	‡181,701	786,683	‖435,277
	1,196,310,000	53,199,128	3,708,122	1,253,217,250	19,199,393

* Payments in respect of redundancy compensation only.

† £554,129 paid direct to the University Central Council on Admissions, and £50,853 in respect of the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride.

‡ £111,815 paid to Cranfield Institute of Technology, £62,335 to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for administration of the Overseas Research Student Fees Support Scheme and £7,551 to the Royal College of Art.

‖ £435,277 paid to the Rutherford and Appleton Laboratories (SERC).

¶ In addition to the payments tabulated alongside the following in respect of compensation for loss of fee income were also made:— Bath £2,470, Bradford £20,910, Keele £5,205, Leeds £56,620, London £80,427, Sussex £85,338 and Wales £13,940.

1984-85

Grants to Universities and Colleges, etc.

	For Capital Expenditure			
	Capital Payments Subhead A2	*Medical Subhead A3*	**Furniture & Equipment Subhead A4*	*Computers Subhead B3*
	£	£	£	£
Aston University	2,354	—	1,495,536	5,301
Bath University	44,861	—	1,193,621	199,362
Birmingham University	—	43,016	2,581,182	23,000
Bradford University	—	—	1,148,600	56,439
Bristol University	—	774	1,887,153	380,603
Brunel University	12,866	—	1,103,933	25,413
Cambridge University	3,933	—	3,377,735	327,233
City University	—	—	676,489	43,795
Durham University	4,083	—	1,233,003	31,453
East Anglia University	692,671	—	930,286	1,553
Essex University	—	—	530,589	217,281
Exeter University	34,018	156,000	969,286	455,104
Hull University	—	—	754,553	677,634
Keele University	363,756	—	545,128	46,718
Kent University	—	—	635,050	139,457
Lancaster University	—	—	757,611	44,390
Leeds University	—	186,230	2,873,986	1,022,212
Leicester University	—	175,304	1,192,989	584,812
Liverpool University	593,779	92,641	2,368,749	1,454,116
London University, including its Colleges and Schools	1,849,557	4,630,047	18,275,779	1,695,187
Loughborough University of Technology	—	—	1,664,425	179,607
Manchester University	35,241	275,274	3,080,436	1,113,705
Manchester University Institute of Science and Technology	—	—	1,588,465	—
Newcastle upon Tyne University	185,846	3,375,474	2,457,685	27,500
Nottingham University	—	220,277	2,113,400	11,755
Oxford University	67,984	130,149	3,443,700	231,745

	For Capital Expenditure			
	Capital Payments Subhead A2	*Medical Subhead A3*	**Furniture & Equipment Subhead A4*	*Computers Subhead B1*
	£	£	£	£
Reading University	1,171,184	—	1,632,853	57,155
Salford University	984,883	—	1,152, 448	842,518
Sheffield University	60,468	281,458	2,285,932	279,506
Southampton University	184,668	—	1,852,764	92,697
Surrey University	68,453	—	1,120,054	308,648
Sussex University	—	—	1,104,250	50,256
Warwick University	105,951	—	902,160	25,996
York University	—	—	788,036	5,780
University of Wales, including University Colleges and Institute of Science and Technology	134,361	—	4,746,220	275,553
Aberdeen University	22,286	788,182	1,606,752	—
Dundee University	335	146,265	818,714	174
Edinburgh University	—	35,744	3,018,264	432,040
Glasgow University	1,462,810	215,821	3,213,174	—
Heriot-Watt University	690,051	—	899,546	54,986
St. Andrews University	—	—	662,496	—
Stirling University	180,596	—	356,414	146,848
Strathclyde University	38,223	—	1,823,957	198,792
London Business School	—	—	56,447	43,035
Manchester Business School	—	—	30,150	—
Other payments	—	—	—	†687,380
	8,995,218	10,752,656	86,950,000	12,496,739

* The sums provided from Subhead A4, earmarked for individual universities as shown, were transferred to a Deposit Account with the Paymaster General from which issues were made as required towards meeting the cost of furniture and equipment. The balance remaining in the Deposit Account at 31 March 1985, which is not liable to surrender to the Consolidated Fund, was £5,946,801.

† Other payments comprise £166,693 fees paid to the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency for negotiating contracts and £520,687 paid to the Rutherford and Appleton Laboratories (SERC) for networking projects.

1984-85

Grants and loans for long term capital projects (subhead A2)

Details of expenditure on works services costing more that £1,000,000 shown in Table 1 to the Estimate

Projects	*Provision*	*Expenditure*	*Expenditure compared with provision*	
			Less than provided	*More than provided*
	£	£	£	£
Building projects and purchases of existing buildings:—				
1. New and ongoing projects originally expected to cost £1 million or more				
East Anglia University Education Building	530,000	635,826	—	105,826
Reading University Library: Phase II	824,000	840,870	—	16,870
Glasgow University Library: Phase III	1,334,000	1,432,722	—	98,722
Reading University Food Studies Building: Phase II	549,000	330,314	218,686	—
Salford University Physical Restructuring	1,368,000	984,883	383,117	—
London University: Bedford/Royal Holloway Merger				
i. Earth Sciences Building	755,000	457,047	297,953	—
ii. Maths. Stats/Life Sciences/Physics Building	1,000,000	128,750	871,250	—
Southampton University Library	395,000	138,568	256,432	—
Sub total	6,755,000	4,948,980	2,027,438	221,418
2. On-going projects costing less than £1 million	2,865,000	1,080,588	1,784,412	—
Purchase of sites and buildings scheduled for demolition	200,000	502,148	—	302,148
Loans	500,000	114,942	385,058	—
Professional fees	2,000,000	2,348,560	—	348,560
Total £	12,320,000	8,995,218	4,196,908	872,126

1984-85

Grants for expenditure long term capital computer projects (subhead B5)
Details of expenditure on computer projects costing more that £1,000,000 shown in Table 2 to the Estimate

Projects	*Provision*	*Expenditure*	*Expenditure compared with provision*	
			Less than provided	*More than provided*
	£	£	£	£
Projects costing £1 million or more*				
Cambridge University New computer	328,000	327,233	767	—
London University (Imperial College) New computer	575,000	517,500	57,500	—
Manchester University Large scale computer	575,000	408,365	166,635	—
Manchester University Front end computer	422,000	395,759	26,241	—
Strathclyde University New computer	142,000	36,890	105,110	—
Liverpool University New computer	1,000,000	1,399,467	—	399,467
Sub total	3,042,000	3,085,214	356,253	399,467
Projects costing less than £1 million	9,647,000	9,411,525	235,475	—
Total £	12,689,000	12,496,739	591,728	399,467

* These purchases are made on the basis of fixed price contracts.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EUREKA

49. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current position on the EUREKA strategic defence research project.

Mr. Pattie: EUREKA is not a strategic defence research project. The EUREKA initiative now engages the Governments of all the present and acceding members of the European Community, Austria, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey, as well as the European Commission.

There is a broad consensus that most EUREKA projects should have as their objective the exploitation of advanced technologies through the development and marketing of products and processes with a profitable global sales potential, where this can more effectively be achieved within Europe on a co-operative basis. There is also a broad consensus among Government that a more closely integrated European market can make an important contribution to the success of EUREKA projects.

My Department has been in close consultation with United Kingdom industry to ensure that EUREKA is shaped by industry's needs. With its guidance, we have identified six market/product areas in which specific collaborative projects could emerge in due course.

EUREKA projects will serve civilian purposes.

Fireworks (Injuries)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many children *(a)* aged under 13 years and *(b)* aged between 13 and 15 years were injured by fireworks in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Howard: A table showing the number of people who required hospital treatment for injuries caused by fireworks in 1982, 1983 and 1984 was published in the *Official Report* on 12 March 1985. For the hon. Member's convenience, the number of children involved were:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Aged under 13 years	265	337	281
Aged 13-15 years	149	173	208

British National Space Centre

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he hopes to make a statement regarding the establishment of the British national space centre.

Mr. Pattie: I welcome the wide support there has been to the Government's intention to create such a centre which will enable it soon to make an early and vigorous start. I anticipate being able to say more by about mid-November.

Motor Industry

404. **Mr Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what share of the home market for motor cars is taken by the motor industry in Britain; and what information he has as to the comparable figures for France, Italy and Germany.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the most recent available information:—

Percentage share taken by home manufacturers in their passenger car markets		
United Kingdom	41·5	(year to September 1985)
France	65·3	(year to June 1985)
Italy	60·3	(year to June 1985)
West Germany	69·6	(year to June 1985)

Source:
Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders

Trade Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the share of United Kingdom exports and imports attributable to manufactured and semi-manufactured goods in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively;

(2) what was the United Kingdom share of world exports in *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* total trade in 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Industry Council

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the outcome of the Industry Council on 17 October.

Mr Peter Morrison: I represented the United Kingdom at this council, which had initial discussions on the system of market organisation for the EC steel industry after 1985, and on restrictions on state aid for steel after 1985. No decisions were reached, and a further council meeting will take place on 29 October.

The council also adopted a declaration expressing very great concern about the unacceptable attitude being adopted by the USA in current negotiations on EC steel exports to the USA.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Speeches (Reprints)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Lord Privy Seal if arrangements can be made for reprints of hon. Members' speeches to reach them in less than six weeks after being ordered.

Mr. Biffen: Normally, reprints of such speeches should be delivered within a week of being ordered. Where proof-checking is required, they should be available within three weeks. I am aware of the problems experienced by the right hon. Gentleman and steps have been taken to ensure that they do not recur.

Telephones

Mr. Skinner asked the Leader of the House what was the total outturn cost, including labour costs, of the new telephone system installed throughout the Houses of Parliament and adjoining parliamentary office buildings.

Mr. Biffen: The final outturn costs of the new telephone system, including labour costs, are not yet available, but the indications are that they will be within the estimated costs contained in the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 26 June at column 401.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on forestry.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government's policy on forestry continues to be based on the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend on 10 December 1980. A number of statements have been made by my right hon. Friend since then on developments relating to particular aspects of forestry policy. These were as follows:

	Date
Forestry grants	28 July 1981
Felling control procedures	27 May 1982
Forestry Commission disposals objectives	8 November 1984
Policy for broadleaved woodlands	24 July 1985

Oak Wilt

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what contingency plans his Department is making to seek to contain any outbreaks of oak wilt in the event of the disease spreading to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has drawn up contingency plans, after consultations with local authorities. If the disease did appear in Great Britain, the commission would take swift action to contain it through its powers under the Tree Pests (Great Britain) Order 1980.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there is any evidence of oak wilt spreading from the United States of America to the United Kingdom.

Mr. John MacKay: There is no evidence of oak wilt spreading from the United States to the United Kingdom, or indeed to any other country. I understand that the disease is quiescent in most parts of the United States, and at a very low level in the timber-producing forests.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what liaison is taking place between his Department and the appropriate authorities in the United States of America on the question of oak wilt.

Mr. John MacKay: Forestry Commission representatives are in close contact with United States plant health officials, mainly through the EC Standing Committee on Plant Health. Two Forestry Commission officials participated in an EC fact-finding visit to the USA earlier this year and a Forestry Commission scientist is the co-ordinator of an EC expert group on the disease.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what effective measures his Department is aware of for controlling the fungus responsible for oak wilt.

Mr. John MacKay: A variety of measures has proved effective in the United States, depending on the degree of control required. These include the destruction of all diseased material by felling and burning, the isolation of infected trees by root-trenching and the selective use of fungicides and insecticides.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what machinery exists to examine imported oak from the United States of America at ports of entry into the United Kingdom for signs of oak wilt.

Mr. John MacKay: Oak imports from north America are subject to inspection at ports of entry by Forestry Commission plant health inspectors.

Degrees and Professional Qualifications

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the percentage of residents in Scotland without degrees or professional qualifications.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The 1981 census sample indicated that the percentage of residents in Scotland aged 18 and over without degrees or professional qualifications was 89·7.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Falkland Islands

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date he received the detailed joint document from the Government of the Falkland Islands and the Falklands Development Corporation concerning land subdivision; and when he expects to reach decisions on these proposals.

Mr. Raison: The document was received in January of this year and has been the basis of our continuing discussions with the authorities in the Falkland Islands.

PAYMASTER GENERAL

Miss Juliet Kent

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General when he expects the Wages Inspectorate to commence civil proceedings for the recovery of wages owed to Miss Juliet Kent of Birmingham, details of whose case have been supplied to him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Action is already in hand to recover the arrears by civil proceedings.

ENERGY

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will detail the projects and cost of assistance given to signatories of the non-proliferation treaty under the footnote A provisions; to which purposes of development each item was directed; what plans he has for further allocations; and what criteria he uses in this form of assistance.

Mr. Goodlad: Details of footnote A projects which have been funded by the United Kingdom are set out below. All such projects meet the requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency for projects eligible for technical assistance that they should serve to

"accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity in Member States"

of the agency. Since 1980 the United Kingdom has provided $1·2 million for footnote A projects.

In his recent statement to the non-proliferation treaty review conference in Geneva my hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced that the United Kingdom intended to double the amount of money contributed by the United Kingdom through the IAEA footnote A system over the period up to 1990. In determining which projects the United Kingdom will support in this manner the paramount criterion is that the recipient state should be a party to the NPT. The agency's own screening process provides assurance that the project proposals are technically sound. Preference is given to projects where there is the possibility of the United Kingdom supplying the experts or equipment required.

Footnote A—Projects funded by the United Kingdom

Year and Recipient	*Project*	*Purpose of Aid*	*Cost* $
1981			
Bolivia	Establishment of a Secondary Standard Dosimetry Laboratory	To provide a national calibration and standardisation centre to provide advice to users of radiation sources	53,800
Singapore	Provision of neutron analysis equipment	Expansion of the Radiation Protection Inspectorate's ability to provide services to users of neutrons	31,000
Malaysia	Training in maintenance of nucleonic equipment, and in application of radioisotope techniques to hydrology studies	To aid the use of nuclear techniques in research work	60,000
1982			
Ghana	Riverine Tsetse Fly Study	Provision of equipment to aid in the application of nuclear techniques to control and eradicate tsetse flies in cattle raising areas	68,000
Singapore	Personnel dosimetry	Provision of equipment to help improve personnel dosimetry services	115,000
Sri Lanka	Radioisotopes in Animal Science	Provision of equipment to aid in studies of the application of nuclear techniques in animal nutrition and health	45,000
Sudan	Electronic Workshop	Provision of equipment to establish a control facility for repair and maintenance work on nuclear equipment and to aid training in nuclear instrumentation	45,000
Thailand	Environmental Radioactivity Monitoring	Provision of equipment for a research programme on radiation levels and concentration of toxic radionuclides in food and drinking water	40,000
Tunisia	Radioisotopes in Industry	Provision of equipment in support of radiography and NDT services in support of quality control in industry	40,000
1983			
Bangladesh	Neutron Dosimetry	Supply of equipment and advice to aid in establishing a personnel neutron monitoring programme	36,800
Egypt	Manpower Development	Provision of training for technicians for use and maintenance of nuclear equipment and in quality assurance and control techniques	34,000

Year and Recipient	Project	Purpose of Aid	Cost $
Ghana	Riverine Tsetse Fly Study	Additional support for programme funded in 1982	36,400
Indonesia	Groundwater Hydrology	Provision of equipment and advice for hydrology studies in support of industrial development on Java	159,000
1984			
Cyprus	Radiation Dosimetry	Provision of training in radiation dosimetry techniques	35,000
Kenya	Radiochemistry Laboratory	Provision of equipment and advice as part of a project for development of national centre for training in nuclear sciences	76,400
Mexico	Isotopes in Environmental Studies	Provision of advice on isotope techniques in sediment dating and transport for use in conservation work	57,400
Sudan	Nuclear Instrumentation	Provision of equipment and advice to aid in development of small scale production of nuclear instruments	54,400
1985			
Sudan	Nuclear Science Laboratory	Provision of equipment to the University of Khartoum for research and training in nuclear techniques	47,500
Syria	Nuclear Analytical Laboratory	Provision of equipment and services for facilities for the analysis of geological, industrial, biological and environmental samples	42,500
Egypt	Mossbauer Spectrometry	Provision of equipment to aid research and training in nuclear techniques	55,000
Sri Lanka	Crop, Water and Soil Management	Provision of equipment to aid in studies of soil moisture conservation and crop water requirements using nuclear techniques	45,000

HOME DEPARTMENT

Race Relations

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when and in what form he expects the response to the content and proposals contained in the paper, "The Race Relations Act 1976 — Time for Change?" published by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Waddington: The Government believe that it is essential to maintain effective laws against racial discrimination. We are, therefore, examining very carefully the proposals for changes in the current law which were sent to the Secretary of State in June 1985. It is too soon to say when we will be in a position to make a substantive response to them.

Amphetamines

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in *(a)* Mid Glamorgan, *(b)* South Glamorgan and *(c)* Gwent have been charged with (i) possession of and (ii) supplying amphetamines in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information, which relates to court proceedings in police force areas, is given in the following table.

Persons proceeded against in the Gwent and South Wales police force areas for unlawful possession or supply of amphetamines*

Number of persons

Police force area and type of offence	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Gwent					
Unlawful possession	5	10	22	10	15
Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	—	1	2	1	2
Unlawful supply	—	—	1	—	—
South Wales					
Unlawful possession	7	16	36	85	106
Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	1	6	3	20	13
Unlawful supply	1	1	—	11	9

* As the same person may be proceeded against for more than one offence, rows cannot be added together to produce totals.

Charities Act 1985

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make an order to bring into force the Charities Act 1985.

Mr. Hurd: I have made an order to bring the Charities Act 1985 into effect on 1 January 1986. A circular of guidance will be issued shortly to local authorities on the provisions of the Act.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Spearing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss of income to the Treasury arising from exemption from development land tax and exemption from tax on construction costs of the scheme for 10 million sq ft of commercial floor space in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone currently under consideration by the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. Moore: No such estimate is possible. Development land tax has been abolished, while the value of the initial allowance for tax purposes of 100 per cent. of the capital costs of constructing industrial and commercial buildings within an enterprise zone will depend on a number of factors, including the individual circumstances of those persons entitled to the relief.

Government Departments (Costs)

Mr. Chope asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any further announcement to make about the control of expenditure on the running costs of Government Departments.

Mr. MacGregor: My predecessor announced the Government's intention to set targets for the control of running costs in Departments on 24 May 1985. The Government propose to set limits on running costs for each Department, for the financial year 1986-87 and following years, to determine the cash available to finance departmental expenditure on administration.

These limits will be set at a level which continues to apply firm control on aggregate running costs, taking account of the factors expected to affect each Department's paybill and other administrative costs. This will replace the single centrally imposed assumption about the pay increases for central Government groups (the "pay assumption") which has been applied in previous years.

These limits on total running cost expenditure will be announced to Parliament, as will details of the Government's proposals on public expenditure, early next year. As with cash limits, Departments will monitor and control their running costs against these agreed limits and if, exceptionally, a limit has to be changed during the year Parliament will be informed.

This change in the method of control of Civil Service costs will have consequences for the presentation of running costs in Estimates. The Government's proposals on this are being discussed with the Public Accounts Committee and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

Venture Capital

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what information he has as to whether the Treasury's definition of the term venture capital is comparable with definitions adopted by other European Economic Community countries;

(2) what is the Treasury's definition of the term venture capital; and whether this includes *(a)* capital made available to any persons by banks or licensed deposit takers, *(b)* loan capital, preference share capital or ordinary equity share capital and *(c)* capital available to persons carrying on trades which are excluded from the scope of the business expansion scheme;

(3) what information he has about any published or unpublished records of the provision and sources of venture capital in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *8*]: There is no generally accepted comprehensive definition of "venture capital". The essence of venture capital investment is that investors support entrepreneurial talent with finance and often in addition with business skills, frequently from a very early stage in the life of the business.

Venture capital investment can take various forms. Often, a package of financial support is provided which, in addition to ordinary shares, may include preference or convertible preference capital and loans of various kinds.

Venture capital investors include individuals, specialist venture capital organisations, which may be independent private companies or subsidiaries of banks and insurance companies, and other organisations.

The Treasury's "Economic Progress Report" for September-October 1985 quotes figures for the provision of venture capital since 1979, from estimates published in the *UK Venture Capital Journal* by Venture Economics Ltd. These figures include BES investments by approved investment funds but exclude direct BES investment by individuals, investments made by non-specialist institutions, and private placings arranged by stockbrokers.

The European Venture Capital Association has commissioned a study from Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co. comparing the provision of venture capital in different EC countries which will be published shortly. However, because of institutional differences and other problems, definitions will inevitably not be strictly comparable.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chemical Weapons

50. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning forthcoming negotiations about banning chemical weapons.

Mr. Renton: During the summer session of the conference on disarmament in Geneva 14 papers have been tabled relevant to the negotiations to ban the use of chemical weapons. I am also aware of continuing parliamentary and public interest in a successful outcome to these negotiations.

Departmental Papers

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of his Department's papers have been made available to the public since October 1984.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1 October 1984 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (excluding the Overseas Development Administration) has made the following papers available to the public on request:

AFRICA
- Drought and Famine in Africa
- Ethiopia: Reality and Doctrine
- Namibia: Chronology July 1984—January 1985
- Namibia: Chronology February—June 1985
- South Africa: The New Constitution
- Statutory Racial Discrimination in South Africa: Policy and Practice
- Western Sahara Conflict

ANTARCTICA
- Antarctic Treaty: 25th Anniversary

AMERICA
- The Cuban Economy
- Contadora: A Chronology
- Cuba: A Military Society

ASIA
- Afghanistan Report: The Fighting, Border Violations, Revolutionary Justice

Afghanistan: International Comment
Afghanistan: Sixth Winter of War
Afghanistan: Human Rights
Afghanistan Report: The Fighting, Local Elections, Moscow Protest, UN Talks
Afghanistan: The United Nations—sponsored Talks
Bhutan: Background Note
China's Foreign Trade
Indochinese Foreign Ministers' Conference: Proposals on Cambodia
Japan's Economic Success: Some Perspectives
Japan: High Technology and Unemployment
Labour Union in Japan: Recent Developments and Future Prospects
Pakistan: Local Government
Refugees from Indochina
Sikkim: Background Note

EASTERN EUROPE
Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA)
Origins of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe
Poland: Chronology May—October 1984
Poland: Chronology July 1984—January 1985

NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST
Arab-Israel and Lebanon Chronology July — December 1984
Arab-Israel and Lebanon Chronology January—July 1985
The Gulf Co-operation Council
Lebanon: An A to Z
Palestine Liberation Organisation

SOUTH PACIFIC
Henderson Island: Background Paper

SOVIET UNION
Andropov's Economic Policy
Moscow Youth Festival: Further Preparations
Moscow Youth Festival: Final Soviet Preparations
The Party and Government Leadership of the USSR (as at 12 April 1984)
Soviet External Propaganda
The Soviet Peace Campaign and the United Nations
The Soviet Party's Role in External Propaganda and Policy
The Soviet Economy
Soviet Bloc Aid to Special Friends
Soviet Arms Exports to the Third World
Soviet Energy Prospects
Soviet, East European and Western Development Aid 1976-83
Soviet Union: The Party's Accounting and Election Campaign 1983-84
Soviet Imports from the West 1970-81
USSR: Health Service Headaches
World Festival of Youth and Students: A Retrospect

WESTERN EUROPE
NATO Double Track Decision: The Present Stage
United Kingdom and Peacekeeping

DISARMAMENT
Arms Control and Disarmament Newsletter No. 21
Arms Control and Disarmament Newsletter No. 22
Arms Control and Disarmament Newsletter No. 23
Arms Control and Disarmament Newsletter No. 24
Defence and Disarmament Issues (revised edition, prepared in conjunction with MOD)

INTERNATIONAL
Aid to the Developing World
Communication concerning British Policy towards UNESCO
Major UN Group and Major Grouping Relating to the UN System
Table of Vetoed Draft Resolutions in the United Nations Security Council 1945-84
Thirty-fourth Session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: United Kingdom Delegation Report, November 1983
United Kingdom Opposition to the Inscription of General Assembly and Security Council Agenda Items
World Fisheries
World Food Supplies
World Information and Communication: A Chronology, 1982—March 1985

ENVIRONMENT

GLC

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current situation regarding the future of the Greater London council's central purchasing units.

Mr. Tracey: This is a matter for successor authorities, and the London co-ordinating committee is required to consider whether joint arrangements would be advantageous.

Rates

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of the Government's policy towards the conclusions contained in the paper entitled "Rates in the Future" published by the council of the Rating and Valuation Association, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall take account of the association's views in framing our proposals on the reform of local government finance. We hope to announce those in a consultative document around the turn of the year.

London County Hall (Accommodation)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the accommodation and its area in square feet which was designed for or has been adapted for specific use of the Inner London education authority and its predecessors together with the approximate number of statutory meetings of that authority and its committees which take place in a normal month and the number of other meetings held under the aegis of that authority in county hall over the same period;

(2) what information he has concerning the approximate square footage of office accommodation at London county hall or its associated premises that is currently used for functions that will continue to be centrally administered by the residuary body or other organisations, including the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Tracey: I understand that ILEA's staff occupy approximately 137,000 sq ft of office space in county hall, and buildings in the immediate vicinity. I do not have information about meetings which the authority holds in county hall or about other GLC office space used for particular functions.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate, in terms of current rate poundage, the approximate amount of money that will need to be paid to the local authority each year in lieu of rates forgone in respect of each million sq ft of commercial development occupied before 1992 in the scheme for Canary wharf in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proposed development is at a very early stage and it is not yet possible to estimate the rateable value, and hence the amount of rates that will be forgone because of its location in an enterprise zone.

Council House Sales

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide further protection against high service charges for public sector tenants who buy their flats under the right to buy.

Mr. John Patten: I have reviewed the current provisions in the light of a number of cases in which purchasers have faced difficulty because of unexpectedly high service charges for repairs. I have concluded that public sector tenants should be more fully informed, before they buy, about the charges they are likely to face, and that a limit should be placed on charges for repairs during the initial years of the lease. I believe also that purchasers should have the right to spread abnormally large payments for repairs over a number of years.

These proposals are set out in a consultation paper which is being issued today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security Reviews

48. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many submissions he has received to date relating to the social security reviews; and broadly, how many of these are in support of the Government's proposals, and how many are opposed to them.

Mr. Newton: More than 7,000 responses to the Green Paper on social security had been received by 21 October. We are still considering and analysing these responses.

Hospital Telephones

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *130*, when he intends to bring to the attention of health authorities the Government's view that it is a desirable objective to ensure that all telephones, including patients' trolley telephones, in National Health Service hospitals can be used by people who wear hearing aids.

Mr. Newton: Our view will be brought to the attention of regional works officers at their next regular meeting with the Department in November.

Departmental Offices (Access)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of his Department's offices open to the public are currently maintained; how many of these are accessible to disabled citizens in wheelchairs; and what measures he is taking to ensure that all such offices are accessible to disabled citizens in wheelchairs.

Mr. Newton: There are currently 497 DHSS local offices, of which 359 have arrangements for access by the physically disabled to all public areas. Provision of these facilities in all cases where the cost exceeds £1,000 is the responsibility of the Property Services Agency. It is its policy to ensure that all new buildings commissioned by the agency have satisfactory access facilities for disabled people and that existing buildings are adapted to meet their needs wherever this is practicable and funds permit.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has made to the representations from the Royal College of Nursing for an urgent national inquiry into the issue of cervical cancer screening.

Mr. Hayhoe: No such representations from the Royal College of Nursing have been received.

District Nurses and Midwives (Car Loans)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his recent advice to health authorities concerning car loans for district nurses and midwives.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities have been asked, when considering requests for discretionary loans for car purchase, to take into account the availability to applicants of loans on reasonable terms from non-National Health Service sources, several of which have indicated their willingness to lend to NHS staff on special terms. As existing loans are repaid a substantial proportion of the £11·5 million currently involved should be spent on services to patients, rather than used to grant new loans.

Nurses (Eviction)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of nurses who are being evicted from accommodation because of property sales and the addresses of these properties, together with the hospitals for which the nurses work, in each of the four regional health authorities serving London.

Mr. Hayhoe: No nurses have been so evicted. Staff who are no longer to be offered accommodation will either have the chance to buy at a discount the property they currently live in, or be given at least a year to make alternative arrangements.

Ward Sisters (Pensions)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the difference between the pension which will be paid to a ward sister who retires during the next 18 months taking into account the salary actually paid in 1985-86 and what she would have received had the review body recommendation been paid for the whole of that year.

Mr. Hayhoe: No meaningful estimate can be made: an individual's pension award depends on his or her date of retirement, length of service and final year's superannuable pay which will include allowances and special duty (unsocial hours) payments as well as basic salary.

Lone Parent Families

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the percentage of households with at least one lone parent family with dependent children as a percentage of all households with dependent children in England.

Mr. Whitney: Results from the general household survey published in OPCS Monitor GHS 84/1 indicate that over the period 1981 to 1983 about 13 per cent. of families with dependent children in Great Britain were lone parents with dependent children.

As a very small proportion of households contain more than one family, the figure for households will be about the same as that given above for families. Corresponding information is not available for England alone.

Prescriptions

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each of the last five years, what has been the average number of prescriptions issued per patient on general practitioner lists in England.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
1980-81	6·5
1981-82	6·6
1982-83	6·8
1983-84	6·9
1984-85	7·0

Single Pensioners

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage of single pensionable households in England.

Mr. Major: Of the total number of households in England there are some 14·15 per cent. with one person of pensionable age usually resident and living alone. (Source 1981 census.)

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, county by county for England, the number and proportion of people classified as *(a)* drinking to excess, *(b)* problem drinkers and *(c)* severely dependent drinkers for each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Dental Amalgam

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the safety of dental amalgam.

Mr. Hayhoe: Dental amalgam has been widely used in this and many other countries for over a century to fill cavities in teeth—over 25 million such treatments were provided under the general dental service in England and Wales in 1983 alone, but very few adverse reactions in patients to amalgam have been reported. Most have been an allergic or sensitivity reaction to mercury which is one of the constituents of amalgam and such patients can have their teeth filled with other materials. I am advised that there is no good scientific evidence which would indicate that any clinically significant amounts of mercury are absorbed by patients from fillings in their teeth. Moreover any small degree of risk has to be offset against the substantial benefits of a material which has been proved to be long lasting, convenient for dentists to use and can be produced at relatively low cost. No other modern material has yet been proved as suitable and convenient for most fillings where appearance is not a consideration.

The potential risk to dentists and their staff from the mishandling of mercury in dental practice is well recognised and can be minimised by taking adequate precautions. Guidelines on the safe handling of mercury prepared by the British Dental Association were last revised and issued in the autumn of 1982.

Whilst there is therefore no convincing evidence of any obvious health effect on the vast majority of patients nevertheless it is helpful to have a comprehensive review of the evidence from time to time. For this reason I have asked the committees on toxicity and on dental and surgical materials to consider the evidence on the risks and benefits and to let me have their advice in due course.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid out in exceptionally severe weather payments in 1984-85 and how many claimants benefited.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985, c. *412*]: About £1·7 million was paid to around 170,000 supplementary benefit claimants for extra fuel used during the period of exceptionally severe weather at the beginning of 1985.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prison Inmates (Work)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sort of work has been done by persons convicted of scheduled offences and serving sentences in the Maze prison, where the prisoners are or are believed to be members of *(a)* the Provisional Irish Republican Army, *(b)* the Official Irish Republican Army, *(c)* the Irish Republican Socialist Party, *(d)* the Irish National Liberation Army, *(e)* the Ulster Defence Association, *(f)* the Ulster Volunteer Force and *(g)* other terrorist organisations in (i) 1981, (ii) 1982, (iii) 1983, (iv) 1984 and (v) 1985; and if there are any kinds of work which the prisoners refused to do.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: This information is not available.

Prison Inmates (Clothing)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether persons convicted of scheduled offences and imprisoned in Northern Ireland have the right to wear their own clothes and excercise that right.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: All prisoners in Northern Ireland may wear their own clothes if they wish, and most of them do so. Within reasonable limits a wide variety of types and designs of private clothing is allowed. But clothing which resembles that of prison officers, is tantamount to a uniform, or is otherwise offensive or unsuitable is nor permitted.

Maze Prison (Civilian Instructors)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why it was decided to terminate the employment of civilian instructors at the Maze prison;

how long it has been since they actually gave instruction to prisoners there where the prisoners concerned were members of terrorist organisations; what savings he expects as a result of their dismissal; and what the cost of employing them has been in each year since they last gave regular instruction to prisoners who were members of terrorist organisations.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: The civilian instructors have not been required to instruct inmates in industrial tasks in Maze (cellular) prison, except on a few occasions, since the escape in September 1983. It was not economical to continue to employ them for a minimal amount of work, and it was therefore decided that they should be declared redundant.

The total cost of employing the civilian instructors since September 1983 has been as follows:

Period	*Amount* £
25 September 1983 to 31 March 1984	147,298
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985	293,659
1 April 1985 to 30 September 1985	136,429

Maze Prison (Free Association)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sort of free association is presently enjoyed by prisoners convicted of scheduled offences at the Maze prison; when it was introduced; and what groups enjoy such free association.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: Since 1976 all sentenced prisoners have been allowed three hours' association each evening, and also periods of association on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and on public holidays. In addition, prisoners are able to associate during exercise and at meal times.

Maze Prison (Convicted Terrorists)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any groups of terrorist prisoners in the Maze prison are allowed one letter, one visit and one parcel per week and can arrange their own recreational activities.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: Since 1976 all prisoners in Maze (cellular), other than those who have forfeited privileges as punishment for an offence against prison rules, have been allowed to send out two letters each week at public expense and are permitted one weekly parcel. Prisoners receive one statutory and three privilege visits in each four-week period.

Prisoners are not compelled to participate in exercise or association. They may if they wish remain locked in their cells. Within the association room, prisoners may choose how to spend their time subject to the requirements of security and control.

Prison Inmates (Remission)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Her Majesty's Government plan to restore the remaining 50 per cent. of remission lost by prisoners in the Maze prison during the hunger strike, or to provide conditions under which it would be restored; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: At the end of the hunger strike in October 1981, it was decided to restore 50 per cent. of remission lost prior to 1 November 1981, except in cases of violent behaviour in prison, to prisoners who conformed to prison rules for a period of 3 months. The arrangements were wholly exceptional; there has been no across the board restoration of lost remission since then, and no such measure is contemplated.

Maze Prison (Hunger Strike)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which aspects of the five demands made by terrorist prisoners in the Maze prison during the hunger strike have not as yet been incorporated in changes in prison régime and policies.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. 59]: It was decided at the end of the hunger strike in October 1981 that all sentenced prisoners should be allowed to wear their own clothes, subject to the limitations mentioned in the reply to another question by the hon. Gentleman. This was a development of the policy introduced in October 1980 under which civilian-type clothing issued by the authorities was made available to convicted inmates.

This is the only one of what became known as "the five demands" which could be said to be reflected in the prison regime.

DEFENCE

NATO (Northern Region)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom forces in the northern region.

Mr. Stanley: NATO's northern flank is of vital importance to the integrity of the Alliance and to the conduct of maritime operations, as well as to the defence of the United Kingdom itself. We therefore commit substantial resources to the defence of the region, details of which are given in paragraphs 430 and 431 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

Procurement Policy

15. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on defence procurement policy for the next 12 months.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We shall continue to seek to procure the equipment the services need at a price which gives the taxpayer value for money. To this end we shall pursue vigorously the twin aims of competition and collaboration.

Trident

16. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the cost of the Trident programme.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the most up-to-date estimate of the cost of Trident.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced an estimate for Trident of £9,285 million at 1984-85 prices and at an exchange rate of £1=$1·38 on 29 January at columns 134-37.

19. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received in the last three months against continuing with the Trident programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Secretary of State for Defence has received some 108 such representations.

Command and Control Systems

17. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent studies he has made on the effectiveness of command and control systems.

Mr. Stanley: The effectiveness of our command and control arrangements is regularly tested in a range of both national and NATO exercises.

HMS Conqueror (Log Book)

18. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in the investigation into the alleged loss of a log book from HMS Conqueror; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Further investigations by a specially constituted naval team have been unable to discover any trace of the missing control room logs and this search has now been concluded.

Nerve Gas

20. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate that has been made of the quantities of nerve gas held and personnel trained in the use of it in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Warsaw pact has a major chemical warfare capability. Its chemical weapon stockpile is assessed to include some 300,000 tonnes of nerve agent alone. It has specialist troops responsible for aspects of nuclear, biological and chemical warfare. Soviet forces are also comprehensively equipped and trained to operate in a chemically contaminated environment. There are no chemical weapons declared to NATO, although the United States possesses a limited and aging retaliatory capability.

British Companies (Contracts)

21. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will conduct a review throughout his Department of the number and value of contracts allocated to British companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have carried out a review which shows that the following orders were placed on United Kingdom contractors to the Ministry of Defence during the financial year 1984-85:

	Total	*Value (£ million)*
Contracts including amendments placed by headquarters	96,191	7,819
Local purchase orders	389,050	303

North Atlantic Council

22. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Council on defence matters.

42. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Council on defence matters.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend had discussions with the NATO Secretary General during the course of the defence planning committee ministerial meeting in May of this year.

Chemical Defence Capability

23. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the United Kingdom's chemical defence capability.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on 2 July at column 173.

Storage, Security and Personnel

24. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any changes in storage practices, security and personnel following the loss of £174 million in the fire at Royal Air Force Donnington in June 1983.

Mr. Lee: Following the fire at the Army's central ordnance depot, Donnington, in 1983, the Ministry of Defence has introduced a number of changes in store practices, including increased levels of stock inspection and restoration, and dispersion of operationally vital items. Security arrangements have also have been reviewed and some new measures have been, or are in the process of being, implemented. No specific changes in personnel were considered necessary as a consequence of the fire.

Anti-Submarine Capability

25. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom anti-submarine capability.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 433 to 435 of volume I of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

Strategic Defence Initiative

13. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what studies he has made on the effect of the strategic defence initiative on his deterrence strategy.

Mr. Heseltine: The effectiveness of NATO's policy of deterrence is kept under constant review. The United States strategic defence initiative is a long term research programme intended to investigate the technical feasibility of defences against ballistic missiles. It would be premature at this stage to form judgments about the outcome of the research.

35. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts to discuss the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Heseltine: I shall be meeting NATO Defence Ministers at the nuclear planning group meeting in Brussels at the end of this month, when I expect to discuss a variety of matters associated with the Alliance's policy on nuclear weapon issues.

Military Training

26. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Defence which countries currently send some of their people for training at British military establishments.

Mr. Stanley: The following countries sent personnel on training courses at United Kingdom military establishments in 1984-85 or are expected to do so in 1985-86:

Algeria
Austria
Australia
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Bermuda
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Canada
Chile
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
Eire
Fiji
Finland
France
Gambia
Ghana
Greece
Guyana
Hong Kong
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lebanon
Lesotho
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Montserrat
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Portugal
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Singapore
South Korea
Spain
Sri Lanka
St Vincent
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Thailand
Trinidad & Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
Uganda
Uruguay
USA
Venezuela
West Germany
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Soviet Defence Minister

27. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet his counterpart in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Heseltine: None.

Airborne Early Warning Programme

28. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with GEC Avionics about the Nimrod airborne early warning programme and the proposed Lockheed Hercules airborne early warning project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Lockheed Hercules project is a purely private venture by GEC Avionics. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler) stated on 17 June at column 38, the company has kept my officials informed of its plans. The company has confirmed that work on this project will have no adverse effect on the Nimrod AEW programme.

Defence Expenditure

29. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on measures which he is taking to keep defence spending within budget.

Mr. Stanley: Defence spending is subject to close monitoring and control to ensure adherence to the cash limit. Defence spending has been kept within the cash limit in each of the last four years.

Gurkhas

30. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement about the future of the Gurkhas within the Army.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the press statement made by my right hon. Friend on 27 September and headed "Hong Kong Stability Permits Force Reduction," the text of which is in the Library.

AST 404

31. **Mr. McCartney** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had concerning AST 404.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer which I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham).

European Defence Ministers (Talks)

32. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with European Defence Ministers about defence matters.

Mr. Heseltine: I last met collectively my European colleagues at the meeting of Defence Ministers of IEPG nations in London on 17-18 June. A copy of the communiqué from that meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

Departmental Efficiency

33. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to improve the efficiency of his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: I informed the House of certain steps which have been taken to improve the efficiency of defence in my speech in the defence debate on 12 June at columns 915-16, and a fuller record was given in the Statement on the Defence Estimates (Cmnd. 9430-I). Measures which have been taken, are in hand or are planned include:

—Increased competition for defence contracts. This has led to major savings—for example, about £60 million in the case

of the new RAF basic trainer and over £100 million on mechanised combat vehicles — compared with internal budgeted estimates.

—A wide range of support operations has been contracted out, including catering, cleaning, printing, storage, transport and training tasks. In the search for better value for money, considerable efforts are being made to contract out or rationalise more work in such areas.

—The front line will benefit from the transfer of manpower from support areas, as a result of contracting out, rationalisation and elimination of functions, in the Army, 4,000 posts will be transferred from the "tail" to the "teeth" by 1990, making it possible to man new regiments of armour and artillery.

—Operational capabilities are also being increased by force multipliers such as air-to-air refuelling and by enhancements to our highly cost-effective reserve forces.

— A new regime of managerial budgets, with appropriate delegation of authority, is being introduced with the aim of promoting better management of resources. The MINIS system continues to provide a framework for this and to stimulate greater awarenesss of functions, performance, targets and objectives.

—The reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence which came into effect in January this year was aimed at the more efficient conduct of business and at substantially improving the Department's system for marketing its forward programme to the available resources. The indications are that it is working well.

—The reorganisation resulted in savings of 15 per cent. of posts at two-star level (Major-General or equivalent) and 29 per cent. of 3-star (Lieutenant General or equivalent) posts.

—The Department's total civilian work force numbered 174,000 on 1 April, some 74,000 lower than when this Government came to office.

—As part of the reorganisation in January, we implemented the recommendations of Sir Henry Yellowlees' study relating to the establishment of a unified functional defence medical services headquarters.

—Many other major efficiency studies are being progressed or implemented, covering subjects such as the defence estate, the contracts organisation, the legal services, the Ministry of Defence Police, information technology and the proof and experimental establishments.

—Royal Ordnance plc has been established and, subject to the usual caveats of trading performance and stock market conditions, we would hope that the company could move to the private sector in mid-1986.

—Work is proceeding to introduce commercial management into the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth not later that April 1987. Quite apart from this, local management is pursuing a series of measures to improve efficiency in the dockyards, in areas such as management structure, control procedures and use of resources, which will reduce manpower numbers by 2,000 at Devonport and 400 at Rosyth. It is hoped that these savings can be achieved without recourse to compulsory redundancy.

Mr. Casper Weinberger (Meeting)

34. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will next be meeting Mr. Casper Weinberger, the United States Secretary for Defence, to discuss United Kingdom/United States defence co-operation.

40. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will next be meeting Casper Weinberger, the United States Secretary for Defence; and what subjects will be discussed.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Ms. to the replies I gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Wokingham (Sir. W. van Straubenzee) and for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson).

45. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the United States Secretary for Defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I last met Mr. Weinberger in Washington on 22 July. Among other matters which were discussed, we had a constructive and helpful exchange of views on the question of possible British participation in the United States strategic defence initiative research programme.

Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness

36. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future plans for the Horseshoe barracks at Shoeburyness.

Mr. Stanley: A number of options for the future use of Horseshoe barracks are currently being studied, but it is unlikely that any decisions will be made until well into 1986 at the earliest.

Summit Meeting

37. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he was last consulted by the United States Administration about the stance they will be adopting at the forthcoming summit.

Mr. Heseltine: Her Majesty's Government have been consulted by the United States Administration at both ministerial and official level on a number of occasions. For example, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), attended Mr. Shultz's recent briefing of the North Atlantic Council and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be taking part in the seven power meeting in New York on 24 October.

RAF (Fighter Aircraft)

38. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current position on a replacement fighter for the Royal Air Force.

41. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had concerning the Phantom and Jaguar replacement.

43. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the latest developments on the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Excellent progress has been made on the European fighter aircraft, which it is proposed should replace Phantom and Jaguar aircraft in RAF service. Agreement was reached in Turin on 2 August between the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy to proceed with the further definition and refinement of the EFA programme; since that time Spain has confirmed that it also intends to continue its participation in the programme. The fact that four countries have been able to reach agreement to work together on a programme of this magnitude is a splendid example of European collaboration.

Work on the project definition stage of the programme is now well under way and a report is expected from industry next summer.

Nuclear Weapons

39. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest assessment of the numbers and categories of nuclear weapons between east and west.

Mr. Stanley: Information on the numbers and categories and nuclear weapon systems and the balance of nuclear forces between East and West is contained in figures 12 and 13 of annex A of volume I of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

44. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now take steps to seek to change North Atlantic Treaty Organisation plans to deploy new nuclear weapons systems and seek instead a mutual verifiable cessation of research, development and deployment of all nuclear weapons systems with the Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Stanley: No. Our objective is to secure reductions in nuclear weapons through the negotiation of balanced, effective and verifiable disarmament agreements rather than to freeze existing imbalances which include substantial superiority for the Soviet Union in certain categories of nuclear weapons.

Royal Dockyards

46. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on his proposals to reorganise the royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced his decision on the options for the future management of the royal dockyards on 23 July 1985 at cols. 867-68. Work within the Ministry of Defence to implement the proposals is continuing; the level of commercial interest in the scheme remains high and a number of interested companies have visited Devonport and Rosyth for briefings. Work is also in progress to form a new customer organisation within the Ministry of Defence.

Air Defence Capability

47. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom air defence capability.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 410 to 413 of volume I of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

Departmental Reorganisation

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the improvements which have resulted from the reorganisation of his Department.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The new organisation is settling down well. A formal review of its effectiveness will be carried out early in 1986.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of Exercise Brave Defender.

Mr. Heseltine: The exercise successfully tested plans and procedures for the ground defence of vital installations in this country. I should like, in particular, to pay tribute to the enthusiasm of the volunteer and reserve forces who took part. A detailed analysis of Brave Defender is now under way, but I have today placed in the Library a report on first impressions of the exercise.

WALES

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from staff of Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth regarding expenditure cuts and future plans for the station, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received letters from two members of staff expressing concern about the recently announced expenditure cuts at the Welsh plant breeding station.

I am aware of the concern that has been expressed regarding the future of the WPBS and I discussed the situation with Lord Selborne the chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council on 30 September 1985. The council is considering its forward policy and is expected to issue a statement shortly.

Bangor District General Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the repairs now required for the Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor district general hospital, if his Department will provide funds to meet the costs, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Gwynedd health authority is responsible for the maintenance of Ysbyty Gwynedd and for ensuring that any necessary repairs are carried out.

The Welsh Office is considering whether recently developed techniques for the protection of exposed concrete by the application of a weather resistant coating can be used to extend the life and reduce future maintenance costs of the external cladding at Ysbyty Gwynedd. If it is decided to use this protective measure the initial cost will be funded centrally. This is not a repair; it is simply a commonsense protective measure.

School Playground Supervision

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make additional funds available to Welsh education authorities for the provision of playground supervision in schools where there has been a proven problem with drug-taking amongst children.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am making available under the education support grants scheme £112,000 in 1986-87 to enable each local education authority in Wales to appoint a person to co-ordinate drug advice and to provide support for schools, colleges and the youth service. The Government are very concerned about the misuse of drugs and its present campaign is targeted at young people. The guide for teachers and youth workers "Drug Misuse and the Young" was issued in July 1985 and had a very wide distribution. It is for local education authorities using their own resources to determine the need and extent of playground supervision.

Health Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of people in each Welsh county, and for Wales as a whole, who are aged between 16 and 65 years and are permanently sick.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information in the form requested is available only from the 1981 census and is as follows:

	Percentage of usually resident population aged 16-64 who were recorded as permanently sick at 1981 census Percentage
Clwyd	2·4
Dyfed	3·1
Gwent	3·3
Gwynedd	2·9
Mid Glamorgan	4·7
Powys	2·5
South Glamorgan	2·7
West Glamorgan	3·5
Wales	3·3

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many places in hostels, hospitals and so on, have been provided in Wales for people with drink problems in each of the last six years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The following table gives the numbers of deaths and discharges from hospitals in Wales of inpatients and day cases diagnosed as having alcohol-related diseases.

Diagnosis	*Numbers of deaths and discharges*					
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Alcoholic psychosis, alcoholic dependence syndrome, non-dependent abuse of alcohol:						
Non-psychiatric hospitals	590	639	727	714	940	1,117
Psychiatric hospitals	940	1,052	959	1,069	1,066	1,072
All hospitals	1,530	1,691	1,686	1,783	2,006	2,189
Diseases of the liver associated with alcohol abuse:						
Non-psychiatric hospitals	304	332	407	365	459	462

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the average age of those people admitted to hospitals or clinics in Wales suffering from problems associated with alcohol, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Average age on admission (years) of in-patients and day cases diagnosed as having alcoholic psychosis, alcoholic dependence syndrome and non-dependent abuse of alcohol

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Non-psychiatric hospitals*	43	44	45	43	41
Psychiatric hospitals†	43	43	43	43	43

* Average age on admission of discharges—deaths.
† Average age on admission.

Average age on admission (years) of in-patients and day cases diagnosed as having diseases of the liver associated with alcohol abuse

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Non-psychiatric hospitals*	55	54	54	54	54

* Average age on admission of discharges—deaths.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many of those registered as having contracted dysentery in Wales in 1984 and 1985 were aged 16 years or under.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In 1984 there were 69 notifications of dysentery in Wales of those persons aged 16 and under. In the first three quarters of 1985 the corresponding provisional figure is 384.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales have *(a)* suffered from and *(b)* died as a result of hepatitis B in each of the last five years, county by county, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The numbers of registered deaths from hepatitis "B" are given in the following table:

Registered deaths from Hepatitis B

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	1	1	—	1	3
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	1	—
South Glamorgan	—	1	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	1	—	—	1	—

Notifications of hepatitis "B" are not separately identified centrally; they are included in the category "Infective Jaundice" which also covers hepatitis "A", non-A, non-B and other viral hepatitis.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people of school age in Mid Glamorgan, Gwent and South Glamorgan his Department estimates have misused amphetamines or controlled narcotics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There are no reliable estimates of the level of misuse of amphetamines and other controlled drugs among children of school age in south Wales. Assessments prepared in 1984 by district health authorities at the request of the Welsh Office suggest a varied pattern of misuse among misusers as a whole, with particular concentration in the major towns. However, information from these sources does not extend to school children.

The Department has required health authorities to establish, in the form of district or county drug advisory committees, local arrangements for keeping the extent, character and intensity of local drug misuse under review and for co-ordinating and planning the development of an effective response. These committees are representative of the health and local authorities, the police and probation services and voluntary sector interests. A clearer picture of the nature and extent of drug misuse should emerge from the work of these committees, with which the Department is keeping in close touch.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from health officials in Wales regarding the possible escalation in the outbreak of hepatitis B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We have received no such representations, but the Department's officials have been made aware by the responsible authorities of cases of hepatitis "B" in South Wales. They have discussed with these authorities the action needed to control the outbreak and I am satisfied that all appropriate steps are being taken.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs in service industries have been *(a)* gained and *(b)* lost in Wales in each of the last six years, to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Net changes in levels of employment are indicated by the estimates of employees in employment compiled by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. Those covering service industries for the years concerned are:

	Thousands at June each year
1979	574
1980	573
1981	564
1982	557
1983	566
1984	578
1985	583

These figures do not include the self-employed.

Welsh Language Teaching

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of cash expended by the local education authorities in Wales on Welsh language education in the current year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend makes no separate estimate of local government expenditure on Welsh language education.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available extra money to Welsh local education authorities to enable them to develop and extend Welsh language teaching in their schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. It is for the local authorities themselves to determine their spending priorities within the resources available to them. The per capita grant-related expenditure assessment for county councils in Wales are considerably higher than for comparable authorities in England, which in part reflects the cost of their bilingual policies.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet local education authorities to discuss the funding of Welsh language teaching in Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Funding of Welsh language teaching is the responsibility of the local education authorities and it is for them to determine their spending priorities within the resources available to them. However, I expect to meet representatives of the eight authorities and the Welsh Joint Education Committee shortly to discuss with them the scope and nature of the Welsh Joint Education Committee's enhanced role in offering advice on policies and priorities in Welsh language education development and in particular on the direction of grant paid under section 21 of the Education Act 1980.

Lone Parent Families

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the percentage of households with at least one lone parent family with dependent children as a percentage of all households with dependent children for (i) each Welsh county, and (ii) Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The most recent information at a county level is that collected at the 1981 census and is as follows:

Percentage of households with dependent children containing at least 1 one-parent family with dependent children*

	percentage
Clwyd	12·1
Dyfed	12·2
Gwent	13·1
Gwynedd	13·3
Mid Glamorgan	13·3
Powys	11·0
South Glamorgan	15·6
West Glamorgan	12·7
WALES	13·1

* Includes all persons under 16 and those under 25 who are never married and classified as a student at the census.

Abortion Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any information as to how many Welsh women had pregnancy terminations privately outside Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The numbers of legal abortions carried out in England on non-NHS premises for women usually resident in Wales are published annually by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in OPCS series AB "Abortion Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library.

National Health Service (Resources)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy towards the allocation of resources to the Health Service in Mid Glamorgan in the light of the Mid Glamorgan health authority report, "Mid Glamorgan Deprivation and Health: The Need for Health Care," a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The joint Welsh Office—NHS resources allocation working group are currently considering whether a weighting for social deprivation should be included in the formula which is used to assess health authorities' relative funding needs. I look forward to receiving their recommendations.

Degrees and Professional Qualifications

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the percentage of residents, in each Welsh county and for Wales as a whole, without degrees or professional qualifications.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information from the 1981 census (10 per cent. sample) is as follows:

	*Percentage of residents aged 18 or over without degrees or professional qualifications**
Clwyd	91·1
Dyfed	90·7
Gwent	92·2
Gwynedd	89·2
Mid Glamorgan	92·7
Powys	91·0
South Glamorgan	88·7
West Glamorgan	91·6
WALES	91·1

* Above GCE 'A' level.

Prescriptions

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what, in each of the last five years, has been the average number of prescriptions issued per patient on general practitioner lists in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information given in the following table is based on all prescriptions dispensed by chemists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors in Wales:

	*Average number of prescriptions per patient**
1980-81	8·6
1981-82	8·6
1982-83	9·0
1983-84	9·1
1984-85	9·2

* Patients on GP lists at 1 October in each year.

Single Pensionable Households

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of single pensionable households in each Welsh county and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The most recent information is that collected during the 1981 census of population and this is given in table 15*(b)* of "Welsh Social Trends, No 5 1982", published by the Welsh Office, a copy of which is in the Library.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, county by county for Wales, the number and proportion of people classified as *(a)* drinking to excess, *(b)* problem drinkers and *(c)* severely dependent drinkers for each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available centrally.

Association of District Councils

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the proposal made to him by the Association of District Councils on 13 February that there should be a specific rural grant to help small-scale initiatives including economic development, transport, social and leisure schemes, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have no record of receiving such a proposal.

River Conwy Tunnel

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales by what date he hopes to announce the details of the letting of the contract to build the tunnel under the river Conwy and the commencement date of work on the tunnel.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We hope to issue invitations to tender early next year and to let the contract later that year; work should start shortly after.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 23 October 1985

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sunday Trading

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has given to traders about the observance of the law on Sunday trading.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has given no specific guidance to traders about the observance of the law on Sunday trading, but the Government have made it clear that the law should be obeyed until such time as it is changed by Parliament.

Police (Codes of Practice)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to issue codes of practice in accordance with sections 66 and 67 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: I have today laid before Parliament draft codes in accordance with section 66 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. It is my intention to bring them into operation with effect from 1 January 1986 by order made by statutory instrument and I shall seek the approval by resolution of each House of Parliament as soon as possible.

National Radio Networks

Mr. Neale asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the allocation of frequencies for new national radio networks.

Mr. Hurd: One of the United Kingdom's objectives at the international VHF band II planning conference in Geneva in late 1984 was the creation of two new national VHF radio networks to add to the three which already exist. As my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw informed the House on 29 March 1983, at column 90, he envisaged that one of the new networks would be allocated to the BBC so that there could be separate VHF networks for Radios 1 and 2, and the other, provided that satisfactory financing arrangements could be developed, to the IBA for the provision of an independent national radio service.

In the light of the satisfactory decisions taken at the Geneva conference, the two new national networks (97·6 to 99·8 MHz and 99·8 to 102 MHz) will become available at the beginning of 1990, although some of the frequencies in the fourth network (97·6 to 99·8 MHz) may be capable of use at an earlier stage. In considering the allocation of the new networks, I have taken account of the fact that legislation would be required to enable the IBA to provide a new national service, and that detailed consideration will need to be given to how such a service might fit into the existing pattern of sound broadcasting and, in particular, to its relationship with independent local radio. I have therefore decided to allocate the fourth network to the BBC to enable progress to be made on the provision of separate services for Radios 1 and 2. The fifth network (99·8 to 102 MHz) will remain available for independent national radio, and I have asked the IBA to develop proposals on the form such a service might take.

WALES

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce separate funding for youth training scheme mode A schemes and youth training scheme mode B schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: With the introduction of the two year youth training scheme, the present separate arrangements for funding mode A and mode B schemes will be replaced by a more flexible and cost effective system under which all training providers will receive a managing agent's fee as well as a basic grant £160 per trainee per month. Many current mode B providers will also be eligible for an additional premium of £110 per trainee per month for those offering places for disadvantaged young people or in areas where there is a shortage of employer led provision. There will also be transitional funding for those presently running mode B schemes.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from managers and staff who operate the youth training scheme mode B scheme regarding future ex-mode B schemes funding; how many mode B schemes are currently operating in the North East Wales institute; how many information technology centres operate in (i) North Wales and (ii) Wales; if he has assessed the impact upon the future of information technology centres of new youth training scheme funding policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received two representations about the future of mode B schemes in Wales under the expanded youth training scheme. There are four mode B schemes wholly operated by the North East Wales institute and one scheme in which the institute is a co-sponsor.

There are 12 information technology centres operating in Wales, of which four are in North Wales. The Manpower Services Commission is currently considering the future funding and development of these centres within the new scheme.

Mencap Play Scheme, Shotton

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide special financial help to Mencap's play scheme for handicapped pupils at Ysgol y Bryw, Shotton, when the five year urban aid grant expires in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Longer-term funding of projects supported by the urban programme is a matter for the sponsoring councils to consider. MENCAP could also explore with the Clwyd Joint Secretariat for Services to Mentally Handicapped People whether the Ysgol y Bryw scheme could be included in the development of services under the mental handicap strategy, which is funded by the Welsh Office.

River Dee (Crossing)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects a second crossing of the River Dee in the Connah's Quay area to be built; when he expects the Plough Lane Link road scheme to be built; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Clwyd county council, as the local highway authority, is responsible for these projects. The council's latest published road improvements programme envisages a start on the second crossing of the River Dee after 1993-94, and the Plough Lane link road scheme being undertaken in two parts, with construction of the hospital access starting in 1988-89 and the remainder in 1993-94.

Roads (Alyn-Deeside)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, on receiving a video film of the traffic problems of Shotton, Connah's Quay, and Queensferry from the Alyn-Deeside district council and on receipt of the authority's views concerning the road programmes for the alleviation of traffic congestion, he will visit the Alyn-Deeside local authority for discussions; if he has received the Clwyd county authority proposals for priority road building and improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have not received from Alyn and Deeside council the video film or the views of the district council to which the hon. Gentleman refers. We have received a copy of Clwyd county council's roads improvement programme, which was approved by the highways sub-committee on 6 March 1985, and its bid for capital allocations and transport supplementary grant for 1986-87. We note that its future programme includes proposals for a Shotton-Connah's Quay bypass.

If the Alyn and Deeside district council has views on these proposals, it should convey them to the county council. It would not be appropriate for us to discuss with the district council matters which are the responsibility of the county council.

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet members of the National Health Service unions to discuss competitive tendering for hotel services in the National Health Service in Wales; what representations he has received from them objecting to competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have no plans to meet representatives of the National Health Service unions, from which I have received a limited number of representations. Experience has shown that competitive tendering can improve efficiency and release resources for the benefit of patients.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had discussions with area health authorities in Wales concerning the open competition for catering, domestic and laundry services in the National Health Service in Wales; which area health authorities have declared their willingness to test the cost effectiveness of the area health authorities hotel services by subjecting them to open competition; when he met area health authorities chairmen in Wales concerning open competition; which area health authorities expressed their acceptance of Government guidance concerning this aspect of policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend had discussions with the chairmen of district health authorities in Wales last July and all authorities are aware that we require them to take decisive action to test the efficiency and cost effectiveness of their catering, domestic and laundry services. I am aware of delays in implementing some competitive tendering programmes, but I expect all authorities to realise the potential savings which exist in these services.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the South Glamorgan area health authority to discuss competitive tendering for hotel services in National Health Service establishments; if he proposes to direct South Glamorgan area health authority to expose hotel services to open competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have no plans to meet the South Glamorgan health authority specifically to discuss competitive tendering. The authority is aware of the Government's wishes concerning the testing by competition of catering, domestic and laundry services.

Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit the Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth to meet staff members and to discuss the station's future.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no immediate plans to revisit the Welsh plant breeding station. However, I recently met Lord Selborne, chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council, to discuss the station's future and have also met Professor Owen, Principal of Aberystwyth university.

Welsh Language (Newspapers)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give financial assistance to *Yr Herald Gymraeg* and *Herald Môn* Welsh language newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am aware of the financial problems facing *Yr Herald Gymraeg* and *Herald Môn* but have received no direct requests for financial assistance.

Agricultural Research Centres

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales why the research centres at Llanishen and Bangor are to be closed; how many staff there are at each; how many at each will be made redundant; what work each centre does for Welsh agriculture; where that work will be carried out in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 22 January 1985 that Government expenditure on agricultural research and development was to be reduced. The contribution to these economies which is to be made by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in

1986-87 will be achieved by rationalising the organisation of the service's R and D and concentrating work on fewer sites.

The laboratories at Llanishen and Bangor provide analytical and diagnostic services in the fields of analytical chemistry, entomology, microbiology, nutrition chemistry, vertebrate pest control, plant pathology and soil science. Arrangements are being made to maintain these services to the agricultural industry. Laboratory services will be provided mainly from the centre at Trawsgoed, and advice from the divisional offices in the areas concerned.

There are 20 scientific staff in the science service laboratory at Bangor and 15 at Llanishen. Some of these staff can be redeployed, and a number of job losses can be achieved by natural wastage, but the total cannot be achieved without some redundancies. It is not possible at this stage to state the number of redundancies which will be necessary at each location. Reductions in the Welsh Office support staff of three at Bangor and four at Llanishen will be achieved by natural wastage or redeployment.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Responsibilities (Revised List)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Prime Minister why the revised list of ministerial responsibilities within Departments together with the Ministers' Private Office telephone numbers, produced by the Cabinet Office, was not available to right hon. Members and hon. Members when the House sat again on 21 October; and when it will be available.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

A revised edition of the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" was not available on 21 October because the information required to update the text was not complete until late on 16 October. The final text was sent for reproduction on 18 October and copies will be available in the Whips' Office tomorrow.

European Anti-poverty Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the different criteria adopted by the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office, Northern Ireland Office and other United Kingdom Government Departments in relation to projects involving proposals for the European anti-poverty programme.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Decisions on whether the different parts of the United Kingdom should participate in the second European Community programme to combat poverty were taken by Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Department of Health and Social Security. The criteria for the selection of applications were set out in a Council decision (85/8/EEC) of 19 December 1984 and associated Commission document (COM(84)681) and communicated to Government Departments and possible applicants in the United Kingdom by the Department of Health and Social Security. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland concluded that the potential benefits to Scotland were not sufficient to justify participation in the programme.

Fourteen projects in the United Kingdom have just been selected by the Commission for Community financial assistance amounting to a total of about £1·78 million over the three and a half years of the programme. Nine are in England — Stoke on Trent, Whitley Bay, Wolverhampton, Bolton, Bristol, Lancashire, and the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham — three are in Wales—West, Mid and South Glamorgan— and two double projects in Northern Ireland. The projects are intended to assist the poor elderly, young and long-term unemployed people, single parent and ethnic minority families. The United Kingdom and Germany each receive about 17 per cent. of the Community funds available for projects under the programme; other member countries receive lesser amounts.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Dental Treatment

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of the operation to remove wisdom teeth for hospital inpatients.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. However, for 1984-85 the estimated cost to the National Health Service of treating inpatients for disorders of tooth development and eruption, including the removal of wisdom teeth, was £164 per case treated.

Vaccinations (Deaths)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each five-year period since 1964, what was the number of yellow card reports made to the Committee on Safety of Medicines regarding sudden death, that is within 48 hours, after *(a)* vaccination against whooping cough and *(b)* other vaccinations; in each of these periods, how many vaccinations against whooping cough were carried out and what was the number of other non whooping cough vaccinations; and what investigations were made by the Committee on Safety of Medicines as to the possibility of a causal relationship between vaccination and the reported deaths.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade

37. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the proportion of overseas trade which is tied to aid.

Mr. Raison: In 1984 about 74 per cent. of the bilateral aid programme, excluding administrative costs and expenditure by the Commonwealth Development Corporation, was tied to the purchase of British goods and services. Contributions to multilateral institutions from Britain and other donor countries are untied thus allowing British firms to bid for all contracts which these institutions finance.

Tropical Development Research Institute

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what requests have been

made to the Tropical Development Research Institute and the Land Resources Development Centre, relating to famine, which have had to be declined since August; and what were the reasons in each case.

Mr. Raison: None.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he has made, or intends to make, to facilitate the transport of his officials, scientists visiting London, the personnel of university departments and learned societies, Ministers of foreign Governments and officials of multi-national agencies to and from Chatham and London after the transfer to Chatham of the Tropical Development Research Institute.

Mr. Raison: I do not expect any special arrangements to be necessary. Direct public transport links between central London and Chatham are good and there will be convenient motorway access to Chatham from Heathrow and Gatwick.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he gave to relocating the various elements of the Tropical Development Research Institute in the London Docklands.

Mr. Raison: The possibility was investigated. A large warehouse site which was potentially available was considered but not pursued because of expected high conversion and maintenance costs.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what bodies or groups, including scientific societies, he consulted over his decision to re-locate the Tropical Development and Research Institute in Chatham.

Mr. Raison: The directors of ODA's scientific units and their staffs, many of whom are members of scientific societies, were consulted. So also were Ministers of several other Departments, including those with regional interests.

Chile (Political Refugees)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received from the United Kingdom branch of World University Service concerning return of political refugees to Chile; what response he has made; and for what reasons.

Mr Raison: I shall write to the hon. Member.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

USSR

13. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what study his Department has made of the relative potential benefits to the United Kingdom and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics economics of increasing trade between the two countries.

Mr. Channon: The relative potential benefits of increased trade between two countries are unpredictable and very difficult to assess. However, the Government believe that a higher level of trade with the Soviet Union would be to the benefit of both countries, and we are therefore doing all that we can to see that this is achieved.

Japan

16. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the visible trade deficit with Japan during the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how this compares with the previous 12 months.

Mr. Channon: In the period from September 1984 to August 1985 the United Kingdom had a crude visible trade deficit of £3,086 million with Japan. This compares with a deficit of £2,723 million for the previous 12 months.

36. **Mr. Ward** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on recent moves by the Japanese Government to liberalise exports to Japan from the free world.

Mr. Channon: The Japanese Government's action programme announced on 30 July proposes a wide range of measures to improve access to Japan's domestic market. The Community is studying how far the action programme meets the Community's stated objective of achieving a significant and sustained increase in the level of Japan's imports of manufactures.

Overseas Sales (Government Assistance)

17. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding Government assistance for United Kingdom companies selling in overseas markets.

Mr. Channon: My Department has received a variety of different representations this year in response to a consultative document on changes to BOTB services.

Footwear Industry

18. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is yet able to give details of any investment advisory scheme for the footwear industry.

Mr. Howard: There is no investment advisory scheme designed specifically for the footwear industry. However, under my Department's business and technical advisory services the industry has been invited to submit an application for a consultancy study. This study would determine the feasibility and industrial need for a computer-integrated manufacturing package.

Tameside

19. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many meetings his regional staff have had with firms in Tameside during the last three months to discuss Government assistance.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I attach the greatest importance to regional policy and in the three months ending 30 September staff in the north-west regional office of my Department have had 34 meetings with firms in Tameside to discuss Government assistance.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

20. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the negotiations to renew the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: Detailed negotiations are not likely to begin until next year. In the meantime I am meeting representatives of the textile industry next week to discuss development.

29. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to discuss the multi-fibre arrangement re-negotiations with representatives of the knitwear industry in Scotland.

Mr. Channon: I and my officials are in touch with all interested parties, including representatives of the knitwear industry in Scotland, and intend to remain in touch with them throughout the negotiations.

North-East Region

21. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the business prospects of the north-east region.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The broadening of the industrial base in the north-east to include new and expanding industries as well as the efforts in promoting industry-education links and training initiatives provide a sound base for the region's future.

Confectionery Industry

22. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to prevent counterfeiting of United Kingdom confectionery products; and what representations he has received from the United Kingdom confectionery industry on this subject.

Mr. Butcher: The existing laws covering trade descriptions, trade marks, copyright, patents, designs and passing-off, protect against counterfeiting in the United Kingdom. Protection in other countries depends on national laws there. I have received no representations specifically from the United Kingdom confectionery industry although proposals for changes in the law have been made by the Anti Counterfeiting Group which represents companies in a range of industries.

Insolvency Bill

23. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the organisations he has consulted about the terms of the Insolvency Bill *[Lords]* during the summer Adjournment.

Mr. Howard: The Department has consulted the following organisations:

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland
The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants
The Insolvency Practitioners Association
The Law Society
The Law Society of Scotland
The Committee of London and Scottish Bankers

Companies (Accounts)

24. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies are currently in default for failure to file accounts at Companies House on 1 March.

Mr. Howard: Of 379,000 companies which had failed to deliver accounts to the Registrar of Companies at 1 March 1985, 140,000 have still to remedy the default.

Company Law

25. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what specific proposals he has for the simplification of company law, especially as regards the regulatory burden on smaller companies.

Mr. Howard: Work is in hand on the proposals relating to company law requirements outlined in the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden" (Command 9571). More generally, I am considering the case for further reforms, with the desirability of simplification and the needs of small companies very much in mind.

Accountants' Associations

26. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals to extend recognition under section 161 of the Companies Act 1948 to other accountants' associations.

Mr. Howard: No. But I am ready to consider any request for recognition on its merits.

Philippines (Aircraft Sales)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about orders for the sale of British aircraft to Philippines and assistance provided by his Department for such exports.

Mr. Pattie: The full range of services of the British Overseas Trade Board is available to companies wishing to export to the Philippines. Representations have been received from aerospace companies in relation to the dispute with the Philippines over air services. This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. However, I understand that at recent negotiations in London, agreement was reached which should allow the continuation of air services until March 1987.

European Community (Trade Barriers)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had within the European Economic Community concerning the abolition of internal barriers to trade.

Mr. Channon: I attended a meeting of the Internal Market Council on 7 October which discussed the framework for follow-up action on the Commission's recent White Paper in the light of the conclusions of the European Council meeting at Milan.

Manufacturing Industries (Exports)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further steps he proposes to take to encourage the growth of exports by manufacturing industries.

Mr. Channon: My Department provides a full range of export services in support of British industry and commerce, including the manufacturing sector. Exports of manufactured goods were up by 9·5 per cent. in volume

terms in the first eight months of this year compared with the same period in 1984, and in the first half of this year the United Kingdom increased its share in volume terms of exports of manufactures from the main manufacturing countries.

Steel Industry

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any discussions with the chairman of the British Steel Corporation concerning the corporate plan.

Mr. Butcher: A statement on the British Steel Corporation's corporate plan was made by my right hon. Friend on 7 August, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Overseas Companies

32. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he is taking to attract more overseas companies to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Invest in Britain Bureau in the Department of Trade and Industry is currently engaged in a major promotional campaign — Britain Means Business. In collaboration with the public and private sectors the bureau is conducting this campaign in addition to its normal activities and draws attention to the undoubted attractions of the UK to foreign investors. Not least of these is the new economic climate for which this Government have been creating the right conditions. More than 88,000 jobs are likely to be created as a result of foreign-owned projects embarked upon between 1980 and 1984 and in 1984-85 my Department made offers totalling more than £128 million to foreign companies whose projects are likely to create more than 17,000 jobs and safeguard some 4,000 others.

Manufacturing Industry (Output)

33. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to seek to boost the output of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I intend to encourage the growth of manufacturing industry through the further development of a climate which encourages enterprise and in which business can become more competitive, and through various forms of assistance to business. The success of this policy is already evident. Manufacturing output has risen 11 per cent. since the trough of the recession in the first quarter of 1981.

British Shipbuilders

34. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, if he will make a statement on the latest progress in privatising the interests of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders have sold two of their warship yards: Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd and Brooke Marine Ltd. Negotiations are continuing for the sale of Hall Russell Ltd, Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd and Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. The sale documents for Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd, together with its subsidiary Cammell Laird Shipbuilders Ltd, were issued on 10 October. In addition, during the current financial year, British Shipbuilders have sold Sunderland Forge Ltd and Vosper Shiprepairers Ltd.

Book Publishing

35. **Mr. Abse** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received about the effects on the United Kingdom book publishing industry of infringements in Singapore of their copyright; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Government are much concerned by piracy of United Kingdom books in Singapore. Over the past few years we have received representations from the Publishers Association, the British Copyright Council, the British Printing Industries Federation and the Confederation of Information Communication Industries. Three Ministers have raised the matter during visits there. We are, however, encouraged to learn that new legislation is being drafted, and we will monitor its progress carefully.

English Estates

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the reasons for imposing a moratorium on the development and investment programme of English Estates.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There has been an unprecedented demand for English Estates (EE) to build factories to the specific order of prospective tenants, and there is just not enough money to meet all the demands. EE has called a temporary halt to further commitments on specific projects whilst it sorts out with the Government what type of work should be given priority within its limited financial resources.

This does not mean, of course, that the Government have taken a decision to stop English Estates' factory building in the assisted areas.

Video Tapes

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it is now his intention to implement the proposal contained in his Department's Green Paper, "The Recording and Control of Audio and Video Copyright Material", to make video tapers pay both a television licence fee and a tape levy.

Mr. Butcher: We hope soon to publish a White Paper setting out our proposals for the reform of copyright law. The White Paper will announce our conclusions on whether a levy on blank audio and video recording tape should be introduced.

Small Firms

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations have been received on the consultative document, "Accounting and Audit Requirements for Small Firms".

Mr. Howard: We have received comments on the consultative document from more than 197 representative organisations, individuals and other Government Departments. Work on analysing the responses is now

under way. This will inevitably take some time to complete, but I will let the House know the outcome as quickly as possible.

Exports (Latin America)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what actions he has taken since 18 July to promote the sale of British exports in Latin America and provide more lenient Export Credits Guarantee Department cover.

Mr. Channon: My Department has continued with its selective marketing strategy, identifying those sectors within the Latin American market which offer the best prospects for United Kingdom exporters. In recent months ECGD has resumed medium-term cover for Ecuador and Venezuela.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the share of United Kingdom exports and imports attributable to manufactured and semi-manufactured goods in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, Tuesday 22 October 1985; c. *118*]: Information as follows:

United Kingdom trade in manufactures (SITC 5-8)

BOP basis

Percentage share of total trade

	1965	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	**1985*
Exports					
Total manufactures of which	84	84	82	74	66
Semi-manufactures	35	34	30	30	25
Finished manufactures	49	50	52	44	41
Imports					
Total manufactures of which	41	53	53	64	68
Semi-manufactures	25	28	23	27	24
Finished manufactures	16	25	30	37	44

* January-August.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom share of world exports in *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* total trade in 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, Tuesday 22 October 1985, c. *119*]: The available figures are:

United Kingdom share or world exports*

Per cent. (at current prices)

	Total trade	*Manufactures†*
1955	9	‡14
1960	8	13
1965	7	11
1970	6	8
1975	5	7
1980	6	7
1984 January to June	5	6

* Excluding trade among the centrally planned economies of Asia.
† Standard International Trade Classification, sections 5 to 8.
‡ 1956.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Dyslexia

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children with dyslexic problems have been placed in private boarding schools by local education authorities for each of the last five years; and at what cost.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not collected centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Rural Areas (Grant Aid)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a new grant for rural areas along the lines of the urban aid grant.

Sir George Young: In England, the Development Commission in conjunction as necessary with its agency, the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas, already provides help to strengthen the economic and social life of rural communities especially in rural development areas. It does so through the provision of advance factories, grants for the development of redundant buildings, business advice, job training, support for voluntary bodies and rural services and other forms of assistance. Development boards or units in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland perform similar functions.

Prefabricated Reinforced Housing

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his recent announcement of his intention to allocate £37 million to 28 local authorities to enable them to repurchase defective prefabricated reinforced concrete houses previously sold to tenants.

Mr. John Patten: My predecessor announced on 9 August 1985 that an additional £37 million would be made available for 1985-86 to help those local authorities which were unable to meet their obligations under the Housing Defects Act 1984. Of the 119 authorities which applied for assistance, 28 seemed unlikely, on the basis of their own estimates, to have sufficient resources to meet these obligations. Additional housing investment programme allocations will be made retrospectively, after the end of the financial year, if these estimates are confirmed by actual expenditure.

The estimates submitted were drawn up early in the financial year and were inevitably subject to some uncertainty. For this reason I have asked all those local authorities which applied for assistance to send updated returns to my Department at the end of December.

A list of the 28 authorities is given below:

Region	*Authority*
North West	Bolton
	Preston
	Wigan
West Midlands	Cannock Chase
	Hereford
	North Warwick

Region	Authority
Yorkshire and Humberside	Barnsley
	Bradford
	Rotherham
Eastern	Chiltern
	Epping Forest
	Hertsmere
	Southend-on-Sea
	Three Rivers
	Thurrock
Greater London	Havering
	Redbrige
South East	Eastbourne
	Hart
	Rochester
	Vale of White Horse
	Wokingham
South West	South Somerset
	Thamesdown
	Torbay
	West Somerset
	West Wiltshire
	Woodspring

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums have been paid to each local authority in the United kingdom in lieu of rates forgone from enterprise zones for each of the years 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85, respectively.

Sir George Young: Payments in respect of rates revenue forgone by local authorities in England were as follows:—

Enterprise Zone	Local Authority	Payments (out-turn prices) 1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £
Corby	Corby DC	125,644	507,694	1,146,190	1,678,820
Dudley	Dudley DC	701,965	1,201,198	1,230,854	1,545,351
Glanford	Glanford DC	—	—	—	65,505
Hartlepool	Hartlepool BC	26,371	147,954	255,734	314,345
Isle of Dogs	Newham LBC	—	109,288	99,450	197,640
	Tower Hamlets LB	—	1,144,672	1,386,381	2,232,004
Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough BC	—	—	—	240,819
NE Lancashire	Burnley BC	—	—	36,525	126,446
	Hyndburn BC	—	—	17,331	74,881
	Pendle BC	—	—	6,008	37,117
	Rossendale DC	—	—	210	21,011
NW Kent	Gillingham BC	—	—	48,749	223,937
	Gravesend BC	—	—	36,000	117,097
	Rochester-upon-Medway CC	—	—	—	544,500
Rotherham	Rotherham MBC	—	—	68,023	251,690
Salford/Trafford	Salford CC	220,837	469,842	617,945	895,164
	Trafford BC	252,534	726,121	973,831	1,201,888
Scunthorpe	Scunthorpe BC	—	—	[illegible]735	260,181
Speke	Liverpool CC	516,244	1,173,880	936,110	1,483,882
Telford Wrekin DC	—	—	—	—	225,000
Tyneside	Gateshead MBC	919,415	1,701,284	1,967,080	2,115,066
	Newcastle-upon-Tyne CC	496,268	880,225	975,354	1,144,774
Wakefield	Wakefield MBC	249,492	392,863	480,903	532,402
Wellingborough	Wellingborough BC	—	—	13,094	74,351
Workington	Allerdale DC	—	—	56,836	127,289

Payments in respect of rates revenue foregone in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not a matter for my Department.

Tropical Development Research Institute

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial arrangements have been made with English Estates Ltd. for the relocation of the Tropical Development Research Institute in the former Chatham Dockyard; and what will be the capital cost of the building adaptation.

Sir George Young: English Estates Limited will meet the capital cost of approximately £10·8 million of adapting buildings in the former HMS Pembroke. It will then lease them to the Property Services Agency, on behalf of the institute, on completion of the work, and lease negotiations are now in progress.

Housing Stock

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish a report on the work needed to improve existing housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend expects to publish the findings of the Department's recent inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock shortly.

Royal Armouries Littlecote Appeal

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what support and encouragement the Government will give to the Royal Armouries Littlecote appeal.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend welcomes and supports the Royal Armouries in its bid to purchase the collection of civil war uniform and armour at Littlecote house. In the light of the amount of money that the armouries are able either to raise from their public appeal, or find from within their existing budget, he will consider with the trustees what further support he might be able to give.

London Ecology Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current situation regarding the future of the London Ecology centre.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer* Monday 21 October 1985, c. *104*]: The London Ecology centre is currently run by an interim charitable trust supported by the Greater London council, pending incorporation of the London Ecology centre trust and its registration by the Charity Commission. My right hon. Friend has given his consent to a GLC grant to support the running costs of the centre up to 31 March 1986.

Following abolition, full responsibility for local authority grants to voluntary bodies in London falls to the boroughs. A collective scheme for funding Londonwide voluntary bodies has already been established under powers we provided in the abolition legislation, and such bodies as the London Ecology centre should by now have approached the grants unit at Richmond. In addition, we are providing transitional grant on £20 million a year of grants expenditure by individual boroughs and districts: once again, groups seeking funding should by now have approached the local authority concerned.

DEFENCE

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement about the outcome of the latest meetings between representatives of his Department and their counterparts from France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Spain about the proposed European fighter aircraft; and when he now expects to make a decision about the future of this project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 22 October to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull (North) (Mr. McNamara) and the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) (Vol. 84, c. 140).

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Miss Sara Keays

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General why, on 8 October, a spokesman for the Director of Public Prosecutions announced that no legal action was being considered against the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) and Miss Sara Keays following publication of parts of her book; and for what reasons the Director of Public Prosecutions has now called in the police to investigate the matter.

The Solicitor-General: I am informed that no such announcement was made.

On 8 October the press officer for the Director of Public Prosecutions informed journalists in answer to a question put to him that a letter which was said to have been sent that day to the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions by the hon. Member was not under consideration because it had not been received by the Director of Public Prosecutions. That information, which was correct, appears to have been misinterpreted.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, having been consulted on my behalf on 11 October, reported to me on 15 October that he considered that certain aspects of the extracts from Miss Keays's book which had been published in the *Daily Mirror* required investigation. I concurred.

ENERGY

Gas and Electricity Industries

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the Government's policy on the external financing limits for the gas and electricity industries; what consequences this will have for their future prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Government agree external financing limits with the industries. The setting of prices is a matter for the industries. They must take into account the cost of supply, as well as the financial framework agreed with the Government.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much his Department has spent on office furniture, curtains and carpets and office decorating in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *23*]: Prior to 1983-84, these goods and services were provided to Departments on an allied services basis by the Property Services Agency.

Expenditure is not formally recorded by the classifications requested but was approximately:

	1983-84 £000	*1984-85 £000*
Furniture	9	38
Curtains and Carpets	2	11
Office Decorating	122	5

The 1983-84 figures included expenditure on the first major redecoration and refurbishing of the Department's headquarters building in 10 years.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs and Excise (Drugs Control)

Sir David Price asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent measures he has taken to ensure that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have all the necessary staff and resources to prevent the illegal importation of drugs into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gow: Customs and Excise resources are being reviewed in the context of this year's PES round, but during my visit to Heathrow on 7 October I announced that a minimum of another 150 preventive staff would be

recruited next year. This follows the announcement in June that a further 50 specialist drugs investigators would be appointed in the current year.

EC (Draft Budget)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assumptions regarding the dollar/ecu exchange rate were made in the draft 1986 European Economic Community budget prepared by *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* the Council of Ministers;

(2) if he will list all amendments to the Commission preliminary draft 1986 European Economic Community budget made by the Council of Ministers; and if he will place copies of both documents in the Library;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that European Economic Community spending on agriculture during 1986 does not exceed the budgetary discipline limit of 20·6 billion ecu.

Mr. Gow: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rating under the business expansion scheme for £1 invested for a person paying tax at a marginal rate of *(a)* 60 per cent. and *(b)* 30 per cent.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *7*]: 60p and 30p respectively.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average amount of relief claimed by individuals making qualifying business expansion scheme investments; and what is the average rate of taxation so relieved.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *8*]: The average investment in 1983-84 was about £5,000 and the average rate of tax relief was about 50 per cent. Figures are not yet available for 1984-85 investments.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a breakdown between business expansion scheme relief allocated to individuals and to qualifying business expansion schemes funds, respectively.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *8*]: Relief for investment under the business expansion scheme is given to individuals only. In 1983-84 just over 60 per cent. of the investments were made direct with the balance being made through approved funds. A comparable breakdown for 1984-85 is not yet available.

THE ARTS

Tourism

38. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the contribution of the arts to tourism.

Mr. Luce: Tourism is a growth industry to which the arts already make a significant contribution. The Government believe there is scope for further development and co-ordination between the interests concerned. I would refer the hon. Member to the report by the Cabinet Office Enterprise Unit, "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs: The Business of Tourism", published in July.

EMPLOYMENT

"Lifting the Burden"

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what reactions he has received from small businesses following the publication of the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden".

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received on the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received extensive representations from businesses following the publication of the White Paper "Lifting the Burden". These responses welcome the Government's commitment to the reduction of unnecessary administrative and legislative burdens on business which divert scarce resources from wealth and employment creating activities.

My right hon. and noble Friend and I propose to publish a further White Paper in the spring to describe progress on the proposals and reviews announced in "Lifting the Burden". Departments are now setting up their own mechanisms to review all new regulations for their costs to businesses. The enterprise and deregulation unit in my Department continues to act as the co-ordinating focus for this important work across Government. We shall continue to give priority to our work with our European partners in reducing EC burdens of regulation.

Tourism

Mr. Hicks asked the Paymaster General what account he takes, when fixing the annual grant-in-aid to the statutory tourist organisations, of the work they carry out to seek to persuade overseas visitors to visit United Kingdom regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The British Tourist Authority is responsible for overseas promotion of tourism to Great Britain. Its marketing activities benefit all areas of the country and one of its objectives is to take all possible steps to spread overseas visitors to destinations throughout Britain, thus emphasising the attractions of Scotland, Wales and the English regions. However, it is not possible to isolate the benefit received by each region of BTA's expenditure directly.

Youth Training (Deaths and Injuries)

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many young people have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured at work whilst participating in the youth opportunities programme or youth training scheme at the latest available date.

Mr. Trippier: The following are the numbers of fatalities and injuries on the youth opportunities programme and youth training scheme in the period 1 April 1980 to 30 June 1985—during this period there were some 1·5 million entrants to the youth opportunities programme and some 850,000 entrants to the youth training scheme.

Accidents on Youth Opportunities Programme and Youth Training Scheme: 1 April 1980—30 June 1985

Scheme	Period	Fatalities	*Accidents Injuries †Major Injuries	Minor Injuries	Total
Youth Opportunities Programme‡	1.4.80-31.3.84	19	718●	9,020●	9,757
Youth Training Scheme	1.4.83-30.6.85	9¶	318	2,989	3,316

Notes:

* Since 1 April 1983, the Manpower Services Commission's accident figures for the Youth Opportunities Programme and the Youth Training Scheme have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the Commission's figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

† Major injuries are classified according to severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) 1980.

‡ Statistical information on the number of accidents to trainees on the Youth Opportunities Programme prior to 1 April 1980 is not available.

‖ This figure includes 4 road traffic accidents and 3 lunchtime swimming accidents.

¶ This figure includes 3 road traffic accidents.

● Major injuries on the Youth Opportunities Programme during the period 1.4.82-31.3.83 have been reviewed by the MSC using the criteria laid down in NADOR. There were originally 311 recorded major injuries but, following the review, 123 of these have been reclassified as minor injuries, and the above table includes the revised figures.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what proportion of average weekly male earnings is attributable to overtime working.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is published in table 1 of new earnings survey, 1984, part A, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Pawsey asked the Paymaster General how many men have taken advantage of the job release scheme since its inception and if any plans exist to extend its scope.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since its inception in January 1977, 293,000 people have taken advantage of the job release scheme. Figures are not available to show how many of these people were men. However, of the 57,000 participants in the scheme at the end of August 1985, 52,000 were men.

The scope of the job release scheme is kept under review.

Skill Shortages

Mr. Spearing asked the Paymaster General what estimates he has made of skill shortages both nationally and regionally and which skills are now in shortest supply.

Mr. Trippier: Evidence of skill shortages has emerged as the economic recovery has gathered pace. These shortages have been restricted mainly to the south east and are most prominent in high technology occupations, in particular, professional engineers and computer staff, but have also appared in traditional craft skills such as machinists, welders, and textiles-clothing occupations.

Redundancies

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General how many redundancies have been registered in Coventry, the west midlands and nationally in each year since 1974.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information is set out in the table below. Data on confirmed redundancies are not available for years before 1977. The hon. Member will wish to note that the figure shown for Coventry jobcentre areas for 1979 replaces that given in error in my reply to the hon. Member on 9 April 1984 at column 97.

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur 1977 to 1985*

Year	Coventry Jobcentre Areas	West Midlands‡	Great Britain
1977	1,232	6,135	158,360
1978	2,641	10,006	172,563
1979	1,798	19,320	186,784
1980	13,665	69,436	493,704
1981	5,024	59,556	532,030
1982	3,087	40,229	400,416
1983	3,667	40,413	326,638
1984	2,674	25,675	237,770
1985 January-August†	1,161	14,321	127,616

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† Includes provisional figures for July and August 1985.

‡ Some figures for earlier years have been revised following late notification.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what are the unemployment figures for Coventry categorised by *(a)* sex, *(b)* age and *(c)* duration, for the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The figures relate to 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available

Department of Employment *Produced on 7 August 1985*

Age and duration analysis of the unemployed for statistical date 11 July 1985
Travel to work areas × Reg (Base 84) AD

Region 04 West Midlands
TTWA 078 Coventry & Hinckley

Males

Duration of unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	13	40	33	43	[illegible]	55	41	26	26	23	20	20	22	520
Over 1 and up to 2	13	57	39	45	227	54	42	29	20	33	26	22	26	633
Over 2 and up to 4	21	68	62	70	315	97	65	62	27	18	27	24	39	895
Over 4 and up to 6	19	47	49	48	170	75	75	51	45	25	25	39	45	713
Over 6 and up to 8	14	30	35	31	104	68	40	38	36	20	34	27	25	502
Over 8 and up to 13	91	113	80	72	262	140	125	92	77	51	55	85	103	1,346
Over 13 and up to 26	19	123	175	146	582	347	255	213	169	165	175	219	198	2,786
Over 26 and up to 39	5	102	130	100	407	298	202	160	146	114	122	206	193	2,185
Over 39 and up to 52	23	161	227	186	445	257	147	138	98	111	126	187	172	2,276
Over 52 and up to 65	0	43	100	69	335	171	112	117	80	65	87	100	40	1,319
Over 65 and up to 78	0	9	63	67	229	136	134	105	95	50	83	86	16	1,073
Over 78 and up to 104	0	11	98	156	410	228	203	184	151	128	157	263	16	2,005
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	28	169	644	369	331	288	238	244	298	385	24	3,018
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	33	511	324	278	301	233	202	209	348	22	2,461
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	246	236	236	227	204	219	260	323	17	1,968
Over 260	0	0	0	0	122	240	206	202	190	195	173	229	16	1,573
Grand Totals Males	218	804	1,119	1,235	5,167	3,095	2,492	2,233	1,835	1,663	1,877	2,563	974	25,275

Females

Duration of unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	14	39	40	39	150	40	20	27	25	16	9	5	0	424
Over 1 and up to 2	16	35	27	35	181	47	23	18	17	8	8	9	0	424
Over 2 and up to 4	20	59	61	55	234	65	35	40	19	15	16	20	0	639
Over 4 and up to 6	19	46	39	29	129	89	38	29	25	25	18	15	0	501
Over 6 and up to 8	19	30	29	30	87	52	35	22	16	20	10	14	0	364
Over 8 and up to 13	77	72	65	52	224	140	72	55	52	50	36	30	0	925
Over 13 and up to 26	11	105	106	96	393	326	190	115	119	91	68	73	1	1,694
Over 26 and up to 39	7	73	103	111	325	270	133	80	74	81	59	64	0	1,380
Over 39 and up to 52	26	124	190	190	261	211	117	82	67	63	60	60	0	1,451
Over 52 and up to 65	0	26	61	40	176	115	70	48	55	42	46	58	0	737
Over 65 and up to 78	0	6	47	38	101	70	43	33	45	42	41	48	0	514
Over 78 and up to 104	0	9	77	113	208	85	60	33	49	63	70	67	1	835
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	26	95	261	87	74	47	60	81	86	107	1	925
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	9	223	59	26	35	46	59	65	99	1	622
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	80	27	18	11	18	27	51	68	2	302
Over 260	0	0	0	0	55	70	31	29	24	40	55	84	2	390
Grand Totals Females	209	624	871	932	3,088	1,753	985	704	711	723	698	821	8	12,127

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Stocks

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the stocks, and in each case the latest estimated value, of each food stock held in store in the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community and the estimated cost of storage.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom intervention stocks of foodstuffs at 31 August 1985 and their estimated values based on the buying-in prices valid at that date were as follows:

	Tonnes	*£*
Breadwheat	58,975	7,005,000
Beef	64,742	164,324,000
Butter	198,022	374,340,000
Skimmed Milk Powder	40,801	43,931,000

The storage, handling and related costs of United Kingdom intervention products (including barley and feedwheat) in 1984 were £46·4 million.

EC stocks are only valued once a year, on 30 November. The volume of Community stocks of the same products at the latest available dates are as follows:

	Tonnes	*Date*
Breadwheat	4,197,000	27 September 1985
Beef	685,000	31 August 1985

	Tonnes	Date
Butter	994,025	26 September 1985
Skimmed Milk Powder	486,998	26 September 1985

Storage and handling costs for other member states' intervention stocks are not available.

Food Destruction

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of each kind of food were destroyed in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Economic Community in the latest year for which figures are available; and what, in each case, was the estimated value.

Mr. Gummer: The following quantities of foodstuffs were withdrawn from the market during the 1983-84 marketing year and are assumed to have been spoilt or wasted:

Product	Tonnes		Value of compensation paid by FEOGA £'000	
	European Community	of which United Kingdom	European Community	of which United Kingdom
Cauliflowers	19,482	572	1,097	34
Tomatoes	4,115	181	229	11
Pears	12,530	262	921	19
Apples	32,076	3,641	2,327	219
Peaches	169,858	—	26,887	—
Apricots	49,642	—	6,782	—
Lemons	382,991	—	58,617	—
Mandarins	139,840	—	21,852	—
Oranges	477,207	—	64,903	—

In addition, 432 tonnes of fish were destroyed in the United Kingdom in 1984. Information on the value of this fish and of Community destruction of fish is not readily available.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Luxembourg on 21 and 22 October 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The Council heard a brief report from Commissioner Andriessen about his consultations with producer and other interests on the Commission's document entitled "Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy". The Commission intends to produce a further memorandum, relating particularly to cereals, in November and more specific proposals in December.

The Council agreed the rate of consumption aid for olive oil for the 1985-86 marketing year. There was a consensus in favour of the rate proposed by the Commission. I judged it right, exceptionally, to agree to the proposal in advance of its consideration by the Scrutiny Committee, bearing in mind that the new rate is required to apply from 1 November.

Similarly, I raised no objection to the formal adoption, in advance of consideration by the Scrutiny Committee, of two minor regulations relating to processed tomatoes and seed potatoes whose substance had been agreed during the recess.

The Council discussed further the Commission's proposals relating to the quota arrangements for sugar for the coming five years but reached no agreement.

The Council also considered a Commission proposal to alter the intervention price for raw sugar agreed earlier this year during the negotiations on farm prices. The Commission believed that tis might facilitate negotiations on the guaranteed price for raw sugar from the ACP countries. The proposal did not secure the Council's agreement.

Finally, the Council considered further the Commission's proposals on minimum welfare standards for battery cages for hens and on hormonal substances used as growth promoters. No agreement was reached. I stressed, in the former case, the urgency of both establishing and enforcing Community-wide standards and, in the latter case, the importance of taking decisions on the basis of scientific evidence and advice.

Common Agricultural Prices

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the effects on Supply Estimates of the decisions on common agricultural prices for 1985-86.

Mr. Jopling: Since the Supply Estimates of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce were prepared a number of changes have taken place in market prices, levels of production, exchange rates and trade volumes. Revised forecasts for 1985-86 have to take account of these changes (which gave rise to a Summer Supplementary Estimate) as well as the effects of the decisions taken on the common agricultural policy prices. Most of the relevant expenditure is funded from the Community budget although expenditure on intervention purchases is not recouped until the goods are sold. Expenditure net of Community receipts is therefore forecast to change as a result of the price fixing decisions only in the section relating to public intervention operations (A of Class III.I). There were no changes in schemes only partly funded by the Community (C of Class III.I). The common agricultural price decisions, including the price reductions for cereals and rapeseed imposed by the EC Commission, are estimated to reduce the net call on Exchequer funds by about £37 million, as indicated in the table below:

£ million

	Net Expenditure (before allowing for receipts from the Community)		Receipts from Community		Exchequer Expenditure
A. Supply and Summer Supplementary Estimates 1985-86	1,547		(1,134)		413
B. Forecast before price fixing (15 July 1985 for cereals and rapeseed; 15 May 1985 for other products)	1,856		(1,090)		766
C. Forecast after price fixing*	1,892		(1,163)		724
D. Effect of price fixing (C−B)	+36	−	(+73)	=	-37

*Includes payments under the fully-funded ewe premium brought forward from 1986-7 following a change in the Community marketing year.

SCOTLAND

Farm Animal Health

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers in central Scotland have reported to his officials unusual problems in the health of farm animals for the years 1974 to 1985 inclusive; and what action has subsequently been taken by them.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available. Animal health problems are primarily a matter for the farmer and his veterinary surgeon. As stated in the Lenihan report, records are not held centrally other than for notifiable diseases.

Milk

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the Scottish Milk Marketing Board on the matter of testing milk samples from farms within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire for the presence of traces of diozins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls; and if he has offered any public funds to the Scottish Milk Marketing Board to assist with the purchase, calibration and operation of the appropriate scientific equipment to conduct such analyses at the level of parts per trillion.

Mr. John MacKay: None. Public health sampling and testing of milk is the responsibility of local authorities.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farms within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, are selling milk to the general public direct from the farm as well as or instead of through the Scottish Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. John MacKay: Fourteen.

Re-Chem Plants

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to ensure that the chimney stack of the former Re-Chem International incinerator plant at Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire is dismantled by the public authorities and subjected to exhaustive non-destructive testing to ascertain the nature and quantities of toxic materials deposited within the chimney; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Disposal of solid waste is regulated by the Control of Pollution Act 1974 part I, administered in Scotland by district and islands councils. The disposal of waste from the premises of Re-Chem International Ltd. is thus a matter for that company and Falkirk district council.

I understand that samples have been taken from the stack by officials of Falkirk district council and of my Department and are being analysed.

The Hazardous Waste Inspectorate, Scotland, is available to advise the Council on appropriate means of disposal.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied that the chimney stack at the former Re-Chem International incineration plant at Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, was of suitable design for the functions it was required to perform; and whether he will publish the detailed reports made on this chimney by his officials at various times between 1974 and 1984 inclusive.

Mr. Michael Ancram: The Chief Industrial Pollution Inspector was required in 1974, before first registration of the Bonnybridge plant as a chemical incineration works under the Alkali etc. Works Regulation Act 1906, to satisfy himself that the stack height was sufficient to secure adequate dispersion of stack gases and particulate. Dispersion proved not wholly adequate and in 1976, in the light of advice from the Imperial College of Science and Technology and the Department of Aeronautics of the University of Bristol, ReChem International Ltd. increased the stack height from 120 to 200ft which the inspectorate considered adequate. The reports to ReChem International Ltd. by Imperial College and the University of Bristol are the property of that company. It is not the practice to make public the detailed reports prepared by inspectors in the course of their regular inspections of registered premises.

Water Supply (Pollution)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied that polychlorinated biphenyls, polybrominated biphenyls, dioxins or furans have not been inadvertently deposited into the public water supply of central Scotland, by aerial deposition, dumping or leaching from watercourses and groundwaters.

Mr. Ancram: It is the responsibility of the local water authority to ensure that water in its public supplies is wholesome. I understand that earlier this year Central Regional Council took special steps to satisfy itself that water supplies were not contaminated by individual PCBs or other unusual compounds.

Environmental Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hours his officials have spent between 1982 and 1984, inclusive, interviewing *(a)* farmers in central Scotland who had reported suspicions that their livestock had been affected by environmental pollution, and *(b)* farmers whom his officials considered to be at risk from or affected by environmental pollution.

Mr. John MacKay: Officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the State Veterinary Service spent approximately 130 hours during the period conducting interviews with farmers on this subject. This does not include any investigations conducted by the Agricultural College veterinary investigation services staff.

Toxic Emissions

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish, in detail and also in a form accessible and intelligible to the non-scientific general public, the results of investigations by his officials and others into the possible presence of dioxins, furans and other toxic compounds in emissions from municipal refuse incinerators in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: I understand that tests relating to their incinerators have been carried out on behalf of the City of Edinburgh district council and Falkirk district council, to whom the reports were submitted. A report on investigations by the Warren Spring laboratory into the possible presence of dioxins, furans and other toxic compounds in emissions from a number of municipal incinerators in Great Britain is expected to be published during the course of next year.

Waste Incinerators

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the procedure which should be followed during a test burn at a waste incinerator and the methods of sampling and analysis employed.

Mr. Ancram: Definition, in any particular case, of the procedure for a test burn is a matter for the supplier of an incinerator, for its purchaser or operator and for any relevant regulatory body. In general, the procedure should follow sound principles of experimental design:

1. The objectives of the test burn should be clearly defined and all operating parameters should be strictly controlled.
2. All samples taken must be analysed according to specified and proven techniques.
3. The test run should be reported in detail.

Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his officials have provided since October 1984 to local authorities regarding means other than incineration for dealing with hazardous wastes.

Mr. Ancram: My officials have provided advice to local authorities for dealing with hazardous waste on the basis of the best practical environmental option; this can involve incineration, processing, treatment or land filling. Advice has also been provided in a published series of Government waste management papers.

European Anti-poverty Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for which organisations in Scotland he received projects involving proposals for the European anti-poverty programme; why he declined to submit such proposals to the EEC Commission; and what was the estimate of the amount required by local authorities to match the EEC money.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland decided that participation in the second EC anti-poverty programme was not justified in the light of the potentially very limited benefits to Scotland when compared with offsetting considerations. Project proposals were not therefore invited. Three applications, from Age Concern (Scotland), the Easterhouse Festival Society and West Lothian Poverty Action Forum, were nevertheless received by the Scottish Office. Applicants were advised that their proposals could not be accepted.

Any funds received from the EC anti-poverty programme have to be matched by an equal local contribution from central or local government, voluntary or private sector resources. The amount would have depended on which, if any, projects were approved but our best estimate was that Scotland might have received about £95,000 a year from the programme.

Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (Report)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will lay before Parliament the Government Actuary's report on the actuarial inquiry into the Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (Scotland) for the quinquennium 1 April 1976 to 31 March 1981.

Mr. Younger: I have today laid this report before Parliament (House of Commons No. 582) and arrangements have been made for its publication tomorrow.

Boundary Commisson for Scotland (Deputy Chairman)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any recent appointment has been made to the post of deputy chairman of the Boundary Commission for Scotland.

Mr. Younger: The Lord President of the Court of Session appointed the Honourable Lord Davidson as deputy chairman of the Boundary Commission for Scotland on 25 September 1985 to succeed the right Hon. Lord Ross, who has been appointed Lord Justice Clerk.

Lord Davidson's term of office expires on 31 December 1988.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rockall

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland about the sovereignty of Rockall.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions have taken place in the past about the delimitation of the continental shelf in the area of the Hatton Rockall plateau, but there have been no discussions about our sovereignty over the island of Rockall.

South Africa

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many citizens of South Africa are also United Kingdom nationals; and how many are eligible to claim United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Rifkind: Precise figures of British citizens and other British nationals in South Africa are not available. It is estimated that there are between 1 million and 2 million persons of British birth or descent in South Africa.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of people resident in South Africa with *(a)* potential or *(b)* actual rights of residence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: Precise information is not available. It is estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million residents in South Africa would be entitled to settle in the United Kingdom.

Drugs

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government through the United Nations and other international bodies to bring about the banning of all illicit international traffic in cocaine and opium based drugs.

Mr. Eggar: The illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances is banned by two existing United Nations conventions, namely the United Nations single convention on narcotic drugs 1961 and the United Nations convention on psychotropic substances 1971. The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs is responsible for overseeing the effective application of these conventions. We play an active and constructive role in the work of the Commission. We also support efforts to draw up a third United Nations convention whose aim would be to improve controls on international drug trafficking, including measures to facilitate the extradition of drug traffickers and the tracing, freezing and forfeiture of the proceeds of drug trafficking, wherever in the world such trafficking occurred.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received regarding negotiations to ban the use of chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) yesterday at column 126.

Nuclear Weapons (Non-Proliferation)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the third review conference on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in Geneva.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 21 October at column 65.

Czechoslovakia Compensation Fund

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the total sums to the latest convenient date paid to applicants, to the Inland Revenue in respect of taxation, and to the Exchequer in respect of the commission's expenses, respectively, as regards claims from the Czechoslovakian compensation fund under the Foreign Compensation Act 1950.

Mr. Eggar: Most of the Czechoslovakia compensation fund was invested by the Foreign Compensation Commission as soon as the commission received it. This investment produced an income of £1,074,367·95 for the fund up to 31 March 1985. The commission paid a total of £322,310·10 to the Inland Revenue in respect of taxation assessed on this investment income up to 31 March 1985. The commission also paid a total of £469,460 into the Exchequer in respect of expenses attributable to the Fund up to 30 September 1984. No sums have as yet been paid to claimants.

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all proposals for amendments to the Treaty of Rome which have been tabled at the intergovernmental conference; and if he will place the texts of these proposals in the Library.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission have transmitted their proposals to the European Parliament. I am arranging for copies of these to be placed in the Library of the House. Other member states have not made their proposals public while discussion of them continues in the IGC.

Soviet Personnel

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why six alleged Soviet intelligence agents were allowed to remain in the United Kingdom after the expulsion of 25 others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: There are degrees of involvement in intelligence activities. We initially expelled the 25 intelligence officers against whom we had incontrovertible evidence of the most unacceptable activities. We made clear to the Soviet authorities that if they retaliated through the wholly unjust expulsion of Britons in Moscow we would have to respond. We therefore decided to expel six other Soviet officials who had also been identified as working for Soviet intelligence, though of lesser importance.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the results of the meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council on 1 October and 21 and 22 October.

Mr. Rifkind: The Foreign Affairs Council met on 1 October and 21-22 October.

On 1 October I represented the United Kingdom. On 21-22 October my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, (Mr. Channon) my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs, (Mr. Eggar) and I represented the United Kingdom.

On 1 October the Council had a first discussion of the Commission's proposals for the adaptation of the Community's agreements with Mediterranean third countries to take account of enlargement.

The Council discussed the Community position in the United Nations Special programme of action for least

developed countries to be held at Geneva including the offer of a new system of export earnings compensation for least developed countries not covered by the Lomé convention.

The Council held a general discussion on EC-US trade relations.

The President of the Commission introduced the Commission paper on measures to improve Europe's performance in high technology. The paper was referred to Ministers responsible for research for further consideration.

In political co-operation the Ministers of the Ten, Spain and Portugal issued a statement condemning the bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis. This statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

On 21-22 October the Council discussed adaptation of the Community's agreements with Mediterranean third countries to take account of enlargement.

The Council discussed bilateral trade relations between the Community and the United States, and agreed a declaration which stressed the importance of working for mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding problems and resisting protectionist pressures. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Council held a discussion of trade relations with Japan prior to the visit of several Commissioners to Tokyo in November.

The Council agreed in principle to a proposal by the Commission to accelerate tariff cuts agreed under the Tokyo round.

Agreement on a draft directive on frontier controls was blocked by the continuing opposition of Denmark.

An EC-Israel co-operation Council was held in the margins of the meeting.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 24 October 1985

NATIONAL FINANCE

Johnson Matthey

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will set up an inquiry to examine the evidence in the letter to him from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch and enclosures of 4 October together with subsequent evidence relating to the conduct of members of the Bank of England, Mahmud Sipra, his solicitors and others in matters arising out of the Johnson Matthey banking collapse;

(2) if he will set up an inquiry to examine the conduct of *(a)* the Governor of the Bank of England, *(b)* directors of Johnson Matthey bank appointed by the Bank and *(c)* David Curtis and Mr. Thomason of Hambros Bank in relation to their activities concerning Johnson Matthey bank.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Member's letter to me of 4 October, which was reported in the press, raised criminal and other allegations against the management of Johnson Matthey Bankers, their advisers Hambros Bank, and the Bank of England. The hon. Member also made the accusation that the police investigation of which I informed the House on 17 July, at column 320, was "a cover up". I referred the hon. Member's letter to the law officers and to the Governor of the Bank of England.

With the Governor's agreement the chairman of JMB has today sent the hon. Member a detailed letter denying the hon. Member's allegations in categorical terms. A copy is being placed in the Library of the House. As for the grave accusation of a "cover up", the hon. Member received earlier this week an equally categorical rebuttal from my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, and I am arranging for the text to be published in the *Official Report*. If there are any matters for the police to pursue I am confident they will do so. I see no need for an inquiry into any of the matters which the hon. Member has raised and I hope that, in the light of the very full replies which he has received, he will withdraw his allegations.

Following is the letter:

21 October 1985

Brian Sedgemore Esq MP
House of Commons
London SW1

Dear Brian,

Your letter of 4 October to the Chancellor of the Exchequer was copied to the Attorney-General and to the Governor of the Bank of England, because it raised matters falling within their respective responsibilities. In the continuing absence of the Attorney-General following his recent operation I am replying on his behalf.

I have of course taken serious note of your grave allegation that the preliminary police investigation into JMB is a cover-up, and that it is being constrained by less than full cooperation from JMB itself. The Controller of Fraud Investigation Groups within the DPP has discussed with Detective Chief Superintendent Squires (who is leading the investigation into JMB's affairs) your allegation that the Bank of England has "kept a lid" on the investigation by, in particular, restricting access to papers. I am informed that DCS Squires disagrees: he has no complaint to make of lack of cooperation from the present management of JMB. Up to now it has not been necessary for the police to seek access to the whole of JMB's papers, but whatever they have needed to see has in each instance been made freely available. I understand that Treasury officials have also been in touch with JMB, whose Chairman has reaffirmed JMB's full and willing cooperation with the police investigation.

I hope I do not need to assert to you that in the conduct of such an investigation the Police Service is wholly independent of the Executive, as is the DPP (who is subject only to the superintendence of the Attorney-General).

Your letter of 4 October also outlined allegations made by a Mr. Hussein that there had been an attempt on behalf of JMB to procure the execution of a back-dated agreement, which would have had the effect of giving JMB priority over other creditors of companies owned by Sipra, thereby defrauding them. I understand Mr. Hussein has been seen by the police who are looking into the matter.

I do not agree with your assertion that the criminal process is "wholly unsuited to find out what has happened". In the face of allegations that serious criminal offences have been committed I regard it as entirely appropriate.

I am copying this letter to the Chancellor.

Yours,
Patrick

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage increase in pay for public sector workers has been allowed for in each financial year since 1980-81; and what was the actual percentage increase.

Mr. MacGregor: The percentage increases in pay rates for central Government groups allowed for in expenditure plans and Estimates (known as the pay assumption) are set out in the table below. The groups covered by these pay assumptions have included civil servants, the armed forces, and NHS employees. For the purposes of illustration, the table shows the actual percentage pay settlements for non-industrial civil servants.

These pay assumptions applied only to central Government. In the local authority sector, no specific provision was made for pay in determining the rate support grant and expenditure plans.

Table: Central Government Pay Settlements

Year	*Pay Assumption (per cent.)*	**Pay Settlements (per cent.)*
1980-81 to 1981-82	6	7·50
1981-82 to 1982-83	4	5·90
1982-83 to 1983-84	3½	4·86
1983-84 to 1984-85	3	4·55
1984-85 to 1985-86	3	4·90

* These increases refer, for the purposes of illustration, only to non-industrial civil servants.

Tax Relief

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of tax relief on donations to charities, mortgage interest, life insurance premiums and pension contributions, respectively, as a proportion of gross domestic product *(a)* 10 years ago and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Moore: Estimates are as follows:

Ratio (per cent.) of Direct Revenue Costs of Tax Relief to GDP

Relief for	*1974-75*	*1984-85*
Donations to charities*	0·06	0·06
Mortgage interest	0·78	†1·08
Life insurance premiums‡	0·17	0·22
Approved occupational pension schemes	0·38	0·54

Notes:

* The figures for charities consist of income tax repayments to charities in respect of deeds of covenant, higher rate relief on covenanted donations, and estate duty/capital transfer tax exemption of transfers to charities on death. No information is available on income which charities received without deduction of tax.

† Provisional.

‡ Life insurance premium relief was abolished for policies taken out after 13 March 1984, so the cost of relief for 1984-85 relates to policies taken out on or before that date.

‖ The estimates of tax relief for pension schemes depend on the basis used. The figures given use the basis set out in the Inland Revenue's note of February 1978 to the General Sub-Committee of the Expenditure Committee (Second Report, 1977-78, Appendix 15). This is the only basis for which comparable figures for 1974-75 and 1984-85 are available.

VAT

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement, pursuant to the answer on 1 February, *Official Report*, c *335*, as to Her Majesty's Government's present position relating to the reasoned opinion under article 169 of the Treaty of Rome in the matter of value added tax on non-domestic construction work.

Mr. Gow: There was an inconclusive exchange of letters in the summer, but that apart the position is as stated in my predecessor's answer to my hon. Friend on 1 February [*Official Report*, c. *335*.]

Sterling M3

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in sterling M3 from May 1979 to the latest available date together with the division of this increase in the money supply between the public and private sectors.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. The figures are published in tables 11.2 and 11.3 of "Financial Statistics". Sterling M3 is defined as notes and coin in circulation with the public, plus the United Kingdom private sector's holdings of sight and time deposits. Virtually the whole of £M3 is held by the private sector, by definition.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made as to which business sectors have benefited from the increase in the money supply, sterling M3, since May 1979; and whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, in each case, such information as is available to him as to the increase in their monetary assets since that date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: On the components side, figures for the United Kingdom monetary sector's liabilities to other financial institutions and to industrial and commercial companies are published in "Financial Statistics", table 6.2. As for the counterparts to £M3, a more detailed analysis of lending to United Kingdom residents is in table 6.6 of the same publication.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing to what extent the increase in the money supply, sterling M3, between May 1979 and the latest available date is due to spending by the public sector net of funding and assets realisation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Figures for the counterparts to £M3 are published in table 11.5 of "Financial Statistics". The PSBR is shown net of asset realisations.

EC (Draft Budget)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions regarding the dollar/ecu exchange rate were made in the draft 1986 European Economic Community budget prepared by *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gow [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1984, Vol. 84, c. *167*]: In the 1986 preliminary draft budget the Commission has assumed a dollar/ecu exchange rate of $1=1·20ecu. The Council accepted this assumption in establishing its draft budget.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all amendments to the Commission preliminary draft 1986 European Economic Community budget made by the Council of Ministers, and if he will place copies of both documents in the Library.

Mr. Gow [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1985, Vol. 84, c. *167*]: Copies of the 1986 preliminary draft budget and the 1986 draft budget as established by the Council have been deposited with the House authorities in the usual way.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to ensure that European Economic Community spending on agriculture during 1986 does not exceed the budgetary discipline limit of 20·6 billion ecu.

Mr. Gow [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1985, Vol. 84, c. *167*]: The draft Community budget for 1986 agreed by the Council of Ministers includes provision for CAP market support expenditure in the 10 present member states which is consistent with the Council's budget discipline conclusions. It is the responsibility of the Commission to manage the CAP within the budgetary provision. In a declaration attached to the budget discipline agreement the Commission undertook not to introduce a supplementary budget until it has exhausted all the opportunities for savings afforded by management of the CAP and by any additional Council decisions.

TRANSPORT

Cross-Channel Link

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to a cross-channel link to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am happy that an exhibition on a channel fixed link should be arranged in the Upper Waiting Hall. I have agreed with the House authorities that this is without prejudice to similar exhibitions being arranged on other channel fixed link projects should other promoters wish to arrange them and the House timetable permit it.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his review of timings on pedestrian crossings which are heavily used by elderly people.

Mrs. Chalker: There are two changes to the timings which could be provided to assist elderly people at pelican crossings. The first is to delay the start of the flashing amber signal to traffic by two seconds. This requires a change to the Pelican Pedestrian Crossing Regulations and General Directions 1969 (as amended) which are currently being revised. The other change is to increase the green man time by two seconds. This change will be implemented nationally at the same time that the regulations are revised, but some local authorities have already increased this timing in advance.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of the M25 are currently lit, whether he has any plans to light the remaining stages, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There is now approximately 40 miles of road lighting on the 100 miles of M25 motorway including an allowance for isolated lit junctions. I have no present plans to light the remaining stages, but will keep this under review.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many junctions on the M25 are lit, and whether he has any plans to light the remaining junctions.

Mrs. Chalker: The following junctions on the M25 are lit; junctions 2, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31.

In addition, I plan to light junctions 6 and 11. Junctions 21 and 21A will also be lit when this section of the motorway is opened.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what warning systems, lights and fog detection systems are in use on the M25, where not in use, what plans there are to bring them into use, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Matrix speed warning signals are in use on the M25 at these locations: between junctions 9A and 10, on the northern approaches to the Dartford tunnel, and between junctions 25 and 27, which includes the Holmesdale and Bell Common tunnels. Elsewhere, flashing amber lights at the roadside are provided. These will be replaced by matrix signals.

A fog detection system is in use between junctions 9A and 10—the Mole Valley section of the motorway.

No other warning systems are in use although closed circuit television is used on sections of the motorway to monitor traffic.

Automatic incident detection is being provided during 1986-87 in the area of the Holmesdale and Bell Common tunnels. Thereafter, consideration will be given to extend this facility to the approaches to the Dartford tunnel.

I am considering what more may need to be done about fog.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to light the remaining stages of the M1, and if he will make a statement on the anticipated cost in providing new lighting systems.

Mrs. Chalker: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend on 12 December 1984. [*Official Report*, Vol. 69, c. *526* and *527*].

Motorway Construction

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to revise the arrangements for monitoring the construction of new motorways prior to completion by his Department and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are considering the curtailment of some of the independent decision making powers of the engineer (our consultants) in future road construction contracts. We have recently invited comments on our proposals from the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Association of Consulting Engineers and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all new motorways or extensions to existing motorways giving projected dates of completion and indicate in each case whether motorway lighting is to be provided.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

Scheme	*Projected Completion Date*	*Is Lighting to be provided?*
A1(M) Roestock-Stanborough	Winter 1987	Partly
A6(M) Stockport North/South BP	1992	Yes
M3 Bar End—Bassett	1989	Partly
M4 Widening, M25—Airport Spur	Autumn 1985	Yes
M5 Widening, Rashwood Catshill	Summer 1987	Yes
M5 Widening, Warndon—Rashwood	Spring 1988	Yes
M5 Widening between junction 6 and 8	Not yet programmed	Not yet decided
M5/M42 Junction, southern turn	Winter 1987	Yes
M5/M42 Catshill—Lydiate Ash	1990	Not yet decided
M20 Maidstone—Ashford	1990	Not yet decided
M25 Airport Spur—M4	Autumn 1985	Yes
M25 Swanley—Sevenoaks	Summer 1986	No
M25 Micklefield Green—South Mimms	Autumn 1986	Partly
M27 Swaythling link	Winter 1987	Partly
M40 Otmoor section	1991	No
M30 Warwick section	1990	Not yet decided
M40 Gaydon section	1990	Not yet decided

Scheme	Projected Completion Date	Is Lighting to be provided?
M40 Banbury BP	1990	Not yet decided
M42 Tamworth, Kingsbury section	Winter 1986	No
M42 Polesworth South section	Summer 1986	No
M42 Lickey End section	Summer 1986	Partly
M42 Tamworth, Water Orton section	Winter 1986	Yes
M42 Polsworth, North section	Summer 1986	No
M42 Alvechurch section	Summer 1986	No
M62 Climbing Lanes	Not yet programmed	Not yet decided
M63 Stretford—Eccles improvement	Autumn 1987-89	Yes
M63/M66 Portwood—Denton	Summer 1988	Yes
M66 Denton—Middleton	1993	Yes

NB: The completion dates quoted above are provisional and are dependent on the successful and timely completion of statutory procedures, and the availability of funds.

Motorway Service Stations

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport when it is expected that all four motorway service stations on the M25 will be opened; and if he will give the anticipated dates of opening for each.

Mrs. Chalker: The motorway service area at South Mimms should, subject to final planning clearance, open towards the end of 1986 at about the time the M25 is completed. An MSA at Thurrock should be developed soon afterwards, but expected local planning inquiries into proposals for Clacket Lane and Iver are likely to delay these developments for about a further year.

Motorway (Road Works)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the planned road works due to take place over the next six months on each motorway.

Mrs. Chalker: The following road works are planned to be in progress on the motorways for some or all of the period up to 31 March 1986:

Road	Location	Works planned
Major maintenance works		
A1(M)	Herts	Overlay north of Clock junction.
A1(M)	South Yorks	Overlay and reconstruction on southbound carriageway north of Blythe roundabout.
M1	Bucks	Reconstruction near J.14.
M1	Northants	Repairs on southbound carriageway between J.15 and Bucks boundary.
M1	Leics	Major maintenance at J.20-21.
M1	Derby	Bridge strengthening at J.28-29.
M2	Kent	Concrete repairs at J.5-7.
M3	Surrey	Reconstruction at J.1.
M5	Hereford and Worcs	Carriageway strengthening at J.2-3.
M5	Avon	Overlay and resurfacing on northbound carriageway at J.15-17.
M6	West Midlands	Carriageway strengthening at J.4-5.
M6	Lancs	Overlay on northbound carriageway at J.32-33.
M18	South Yorks	Overlay on northbound carriageway at J.1-2.
M18	Humberside	Concrete overlay between J.6 and M62.
M20	Kent	Reconstruction and overlay at J.5-7.
M25	Herts	Joint replacement at J.23-24.
M62	Merseyside	Resurfacing at J.7-9.
M62	GMC	Overlay and resurfacing at J.17-19.
M62	West Yorks	Reconstruction and bridgeworks at J.32-33.
M69	Leics	Joint repairs between M1, J.21 and M69, J.1.
M180	Humberside	Inlay at J.3-4.
Improvement works		
M1	Herts	Signals at J.12 and J.9.
M1/M18	West Yorks	Erection of removable barriers in central reserve gaps.
M4	Berks	Lighting replacement.
M4/A34	Berks	Anti skid treatment.
M4/A4	Berks	Anti skid treatment.
M4	Bucks	Lighting improvements at Denham.
M5	Devon and Somerset	Safety barriers around communications equipment between J.19-31.
M5	Hereford and Worcs	Widening between Warndon and Lydiate Ash.
M5/M42	Hereford and Worcs	New junction.
M11	Essex	Junction improvement at J.7.
M25	Surrey	Gantries at Mersham.
M25/M23	Surrey	Anti-skid treatment.

Road	Location	Works planned
M25	Herts	Erection of noise barriers.
M25	Herts	Provision of traffic signals at Hunton bridge.
M25	Essex	Provision of police observation platforms.
M61	Lancs	New junction south of M6.
M62	West Yorks	Lighting improvements between J.22-27.
M62/M63	GMC	Improvement to Eccles interchange.
M63	GMC	Widening between J.5-7 (Carrington spur).
M63	GMC	Widening between J.1-3.

In addition there will be considerable numbers of smaller maintenance and improvements schemes in progress throughout the network at some time during the period.

Diesel Multiple Units

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, before a contract to build 23-metre diesel multiple units for British Rail is awarded, he will arrange an independent investigation of the tenders to see if any malpractice has occurred, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Decisions on contracts are entirely a matter for the British Railways Board, and I know of no reason why this case should be an exception.

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will seek to reduce the maximum permissible speed limit for road passenger service vehicles to 50 mph;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to ban coaches from the outside third lane of three-lane motorways;

(3) whether he is now proposing any new measures to seek to reduce coach accidents, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I recognise the concerns reflected in my hon. Friend's questions. As I assured the House on 22 October, I am looking very carefully at every aspect of the speed and safety of coaches on motorways. I must consider all the evidence before making final decisions.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now seek to establish a system for monitoring coach crashes in separate accident statistics.

Mrs. Chalker: The existing reporting system, Stats 19, already identifies those accidents involving buses or coaches, and these statistics are published in "Road Accidents Great Britain."

It is, however, difficult for reporting officers to make a distinction between bus and coach involvements, although in most motorway accidents the statistics will refer to coaches.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce measures to make all double-decked coaches subject to the same laws as double-decked buses.

Mrs. Chalker: No distinction is drawn between double-decked coaches and double-decked buses in the application of construction and safety requirements.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further action he intends to take to seek to resove the teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 22 October column 152.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of school teachers has participated in industrial action involving absence from their place of work since 1 January 1985.

Sir Keith Joseph: Of the six school teacher unions which represent a total of 442,000 teachers, only two—the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, with a combined membership of 332,000 — have engaged in strikes in pursuit of their pay claim this year. No figures are available in the Department of the proportion of members who have followed their unions' advice or instructions to join these strikes virtually all of which have been selective and of short duration and so designed as to cause maximum disruption to the schools at mimimum cost to the teacher unions involved. However, I understand that some members of these unions have not struck and I respect their decision to put their pupils' interests first.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent teachers are paid additional remuneration whilst attending courses not in term time.

Sir Keith Joseph: Salary scales for teachers in maintained schools in England and Wales are set out in the Burnham document in the form of annual salary rates applicable to full-time teachers. Overtime or any other payments are not available for work or training undertaken out of timetabled school hours. Allowances for expenses while attending courses may be paid at local education authority discretion, but information about this is not held centrally.

Polytechnics

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the criteria that he applies when deciding whether or not to grant polytechnic status to an existing institution of higher and further education.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has indicated that he would welcome advice from the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education whether and, if so, on what basis further institutions should be added to

the original list designated as polytechnics following publication of the 1966 White Paper, "A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges."

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the National Advisory Body for Further and Higher Education to make recommendations about future new polytechnics.

Mr. Brooke: No deadline has been set but I understand that the national advisory body hopes to offer advice by early 1986.

ENERGY

Miners (Unemployment Benefit)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the calculation of unemployment benefit for miners who were engaged in industrial action in 1984 and 1985 and who accept redundancy in the coming months.

Mr. David Hunt: I am advised that entitlement to unemployment benefit for claims commencing in the 1986 benefit year depends upon the claimants' national insurance contributions record during the 1984-85 tax year. This will apply to miners whose redundancy date falls on or after 3 January 1986. Subject to their otherwise satisfying the conditions for receipt of unemployment benefit, those men who paid national insurance contributions on earnings of 50 times the specified lower earnings limit (£1,700) or more will be entitled to payment at the standard rate of £30·45 pw, plus £18·80 pw dependant's allowance where applicable; those who paid contributions on between 37½ and 50 times the lower earnings limit (£1,275-£1,699) will receive reduced rates of £22·84 pw and £14·10 pw; those who paid contributions on between 25 and 37½ times the lower earnings limit (£850-£1,274) will receive reduced rates of £15·23 pw and £9·40 pw respectively; and those who paid contributions on earnings of less than £850 will have no entitlement.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

HMS Conqueror (Log Book)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what was the cost of Detective Superintendent Hardy's visit to the West Indies with a colleague on the investigation relating to the loss of HMS Conqueror's log book.

The Solicitor-General: Six thousand nine hundred and forty pounds and eighty two pence.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General whether he has any conveniently available figures for the cost of the inquiry into the loss of HMS Conqueror's log book.

The Solicitor-General: So far as concerns the cost of the police investigation in the West Indies, I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I have just given to his question on that matter. I am not able to quantify the other costs of the police investigation. In so far as the question relates to the inquiry made by naval authorities, it is a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General if the conclusion of the Director of Public Prosecutions that further police investigations were unlikely to produce any evidence of the commission of a criminal offence regarding the disappearance of the control room log of HMS Conqueror was based on information about the whereabouts at the time, or the current whereabouts, of the relevant portions of the log; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The police investigations were unable to identify at what point of time or in what circumstances the control room logs in question were improperly handled with the result that they are now missing. Their present whereabouts are not known. The conclusion that further investigations are unlikely to provide evidence of the commission of a criminal offence is based on the inconclusiveness of the information so far obtained about the circumstances in which the logs disappeared and the absence of any leads to further avenues of inquiry which might throw light on those circumstances.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General pursuant to the answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *12*, regarding the disappearance of the control room log of HMS Conqueror, whether the police inquiry revealed that a criminal offence had been committed; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 21 October. The conclusion of the Director of Public Prosecutions, in the light of the report of the police investigations, was that the evidence available did not establish that a criminal offence had been committed in connection with the disappearance of the logs. I concurred in that conclusion.

Prosecution Criteria

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what criteria as regards the robustness of the evidence and the likelihood of securing a conviction the Director of Public Prosecutions employs in deciding whether to mount a prosecution; whether any special criteria apply in the case of alleged offences under the Official Secrets Acts; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: All cases referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions are considered in the light of the Attorney-General's "Guidelines on the Criteria for Prosecution" which were published in February 1983, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House. Prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act 1911 are treated no differently from any other case which the director has to consider.

PRIME MINISTER

Charities

Q14. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Prime Minister if the Government will now introduce legislation to provide financial incentives for private contributions for charitable purposes, including famine relief.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Tax relief is already given for payments made to a charity under a deed of covenant. The Government have introduced a number of measures to encourage charitable

giving; for example, in this year's Budget the limit on covenanted donations qualifying for higher rate tax relief was increased from £5,000 to £10,000.

Mr. Shimon Peres

Q26. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether a date has yet been fixed for Mr. Shimon Peres to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The visit has been fixed for early 1986. Precise dates will be announced nearer the time.

Civil Servants

Q40. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *132*. about the letter from Sir Robert Armstrong about the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers, over any convenient period, what was the number of occasions on which a senior civil servant has gone, in relation to a matter of conscience, to the head of the Home Civil Service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Sir Robert Armstrong's note said:

"11. A civil servant who feels that to act or to abstain from acting in a particular way, or to acquiesce in a particular decision for course of action, would raise for him or her a fundamental issue of conscience, or is so profoundly opposed to a policy as to feel unable conscientiously to administer it in accordance with the standards described in this note, should consult a superior officer, or in the last resort the Permanent Head of the Department, who can and should if necessary consult the Head of the Home Civil Service."

The words "or in the last resort the Permanent Head of the Department" were inadvertently omitted from the text of the note printed in the *Official Report* for 26 February 1985, at columns *130-2*].

The procedure envisaged is thus for the civil servant troubled by an issue of conscience in the manner described to consult in the first instance a superior officer, or in the last resort his permanent secretary. It is only after there has been consultation of the permanent secretary that there is any question of consulting the head of the Home Civil Service, and then it is for the permanent secretary and not for the individual concerned to initiate that consultation.

Such approaches to the head of the Home Civil Service are likely to be very rare. They would be treated as entirely confidential, and it would not be appropriate to disclose information about them. But I can say that there have been no such approaches since Sir Robert Armstrong's note was issued on 26 February 1985.

European Council

Q71. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister, if she is satisfied with the preparations made for the next meeting of the European Council in December, and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

It is for the Luxembourg Presidency to make arrangements for the European Council in December. I expect the work of the inter-governmental conference, now in progress, to be one of the main topics at that meeting.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 24 October.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 24 October.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in New York to address the 40th anniversary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, and to have meetings with President Reagan and others.

Personal Data

Mr. Freeson asked the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government will ratify the Council of Europe convention for the protection of individuals with regard to the automatic processing of personal data.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

We expect to ratify the convention in August 1987. It will then come into force in respect of the United Kingdom on 1 December 1987, at which time all the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 will be fully enforceable.

Mr. Freeson asked the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government will take to ensure access by individuals to personal data files held by Government Departments and state agencies.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The Data Protection Act 1984 applies to all those, including Government Departments and state agencies, who control the contents and use of personal information which is processed automatically. Except where one of the limited exemptions provided in the Act applies, any person who is the subject of information held on computer will, from November 1987, have a right to know what information about him is held and to have a copy of it. The Government have no present proposals to grant a similar general right of access to personal records held on paper files.

Public Money (Allocation)

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister what is the total overall identifiable allocation of public money made by the Government since 1979 to *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Lambeth, *(d)* Newcastle, *(e)* Hammersmith, *(f)* Cardiff, *(g)* Haringey, *(h)* Southampton, *(i)* Leicester and *(j)* Leeds (i) in total, (ii) per person and (iii) per unemployed person aged under 21 years.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The readily available information covers grants and subsidies paid to local authorities. These include rate support grant, housing subsidies, housing benefit, specific revenue grants and capital grants.

Table 1 shows the totals for each of the authorities concerned from 1979-80 to 1985-86 and the amounts per person. Information on unemployed persons under 21 by local authority area is not readily available.

The totals for the English authorities for 1984-85 and 1985-86 do not include capital grants, for which figures are not yet available. The capital grants figures included in the totals for these authorities from 1979-80 to 1983-84 are shown in table 2.

TABLE 1
Total identifiable grants and subsidies

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
(a) Edinburgh							
(i) In total (£ million)	39·7	47·2	49·5	44·7	83·1	66·5	71·6
(ii) Per person (£)	87·12	104·16	110·84	100·48	188·51	151·15	163·07
(b) Bristol							
(i) In total (£ million)	38·2	46·0	26·1	29·3	56·2	54·9	57·5
(ii) Per person (£)	90·87	113·38	65·14	73·25	140·87	138·51	144·95
(c) Lambeth							
(i) In total (£ million)	93·5	109·9	104·1	112·1	143·2	136·4	142·9
(ii) Per person (£)	314·96	419·04	407·55	452·47	584·51	558·45	585·3
(d) Newcastle upon Tyne							
(i) In total (£ million)	78·9	93·8	75·6	63·1	90·4	91·7	66·2
(ii) Per person (£)	266·89	323·57	266·58	224·71	321·60	326·20	235·51
(e) Hammersmith							
(i) In total (£ million)	50·8	56·1	56·2	55·4	76·0	73·4	83·7
(ii) Per person (£)	294·66	354·51	367·14	370·54	505·56	486·91	555·18
(f) Cardiff							
(i) In total (£ million)	36·8	41·4	25·7	25·2	45·3	45·9	58·4
(ii) Per person (£)	130·24	146·89	91·61	90·14	162·02	163·10	207·50
(g) Haringey							
(i) In total (£ million)	79·9	101·5	102·1	99·3	119·5	112·2	113·7
(ii) Per person (£)	343·16	458·31	491·35	485·31	583·74	560·5[illegible]	568·37
(h) Southampton							
(i) In total (£ million)	21·4	24·3	13·4	14·9	29·3	27·1	29·9
(ii) Per person (£)	99·24	117·87	64·14	71·62	141·86	132·92	146·59
(i) Leicester							
(i) In total (£ million)	34·6	39·8	30·5	31·5	48·9	46·9	51·1
(ii) Per person (£)	119·22	143·87	107·93	111·70	173·78	166·66	181·51
(j) Leeds							
(i) In total (£ million)	155·7	188·5	156·7	163·9	203·5	202·2	196·7
(ii) Per person (£)	207·91	260·23	218·68	228·85	285·04	283·98	276·10

Notes to Table 1

1. The figures included for rate support grant are affected by the change which occurred in 1981-82 when block grant and domestic rate relief grant superseded the needs, resources and domestic elements. The figures prior to 1981-82 are not on a comparable basis.

2. Up to 1982-83 the figures include rent and rate rebates grants paid by the DOE. The 1982-83 figures also include some housing benefits paid by the DHSS. Thereafter, all housing benefits were paid by the DHSS.

3. Capital grants are not available for English authorities for 1984-85 and 1985-86 and they are excluded from the totals for these years. Table 2 shows the amounts included for capital grants in the totals for the English authorities up to 1983-84.

4. Population figures provided by OCPS for the years up to 1984-85 have been used to calculate the figures per person. The 1984-85 figures have been used as estimates for 1985-86.

Table 2
Capital Grants included in Table 1
English Authorities (£ million)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Bristol	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·5
Lambeth	3·6	3·7	1·4	0·3	2·4
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1·0	0·7	0·8	0·5	1·2
Hammersmith	2·6	0·1	4·3	2·2	0·3
Haringey	3·3	11·1	8·9	4·1	2·9
Southampton	0·5	1·0	0·2	0·3	0·4
Leicester	1·8	2·4	2·4	2·0	3·0
Leeds	0·9	1·3	1·0	4·6	3·6

GCHQ

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will now list the dates on which industrial action has taken place at Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham, since May 1979.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 30 January 1984:

—There was a one-day strike on 23 February 1979 followed by selective active continuing until 2 April 1979.
—On 22 June 1979 there was another one-day strike followed by selective action up to and including 25 July.
—In September 1979 there was a work to rule and overtime ban by industrial staff.
—Between 20 December 1979 and 13 February 1980 there was industrial action in support of a pay dispute by station radio officers.
—On 14 May 1980, GCHQ staff were involved in the TUC day of action.
—On 27 November 1980 there was a protest meeting against the cancellation of the pay research unit.
—On 9 March 1981 there was a one-day strike followed by various forms of industrial action until 14 April 1981.
—Between 10 June 1982 and 26 October 1982 there was an overtime ban by staff at an overseas station.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Credit Guarantees

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the current limit for export credit guarantees available for each country in Latin America and the Caribbean and the extent of take-up in each case.

Mr. Channon: No. It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to disclose details of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's individual country limits or exposure.

Audio and Video Tape Recording

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide details of the current extent of home taping of copyright pre-recorded music in millions of hours per year and the proportion of television programmes seen more than once through the use of video recording machines.

Mr. Butcher: The Government do not compile statistics on either of these activities, but respondents to the recent Green Paper "The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material" (Cmnd. 9445) have submitted the results of commissioned market research. These give estimates of the extent of home taping of copyright music varying from 312 to 466 million hours a year. One survey estimates that 7 per cent. of viewed programmes are recorded and watched, with 1 per cent. being seen more than once.

Comprehensive Bankers' Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether a decision has been taken on the future of the comprehensive bankers' guarantee scheme operated by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Channon: This scheme has been under review because demand for it has been falling and it has been losing money. I have decided, after consultation with existing users and the banks, that the scheme should be phased out over a period of two years. It is no longer fulfilling its original purpose and the banks and other financial institutions are well able to provide alternative forms of short term export trade finance to viable companies. The Export Credits Guarantee Department will be advising all current users of the detailed arrangements.

WALES

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions over the past six years he has met the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality and if he will make a statement on his working relationship with the commission.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality. A Welsh Office official attends meetings of the commission's Welsh Consultative Committee, and in addition there is contact from time to time between officials of the Department and the commission's Birmingham office.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the cash available to combat acquired immune deficiency syndrome in Wales, where treatment for acquired immune deficiency syndrome in Wales will be located, how much cash each centre will receive, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health recently announced that the Government were making £912,000 available in 1985-86 to combat AIDS, in addition to the £978,000 that had previously been announced. These funding measures, from which Wales will benefit, provide for the development of a training programme for counsellors, and testing of blood samples at Public Health Laboratory Service laboratories, assistance for voluntary organisations, and public health education work. In addition, the Government have channelled £376,000 for research into AIDS through the Medical Research Council.

In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has made available £335,000 this year to provide facilities for the screening of blood donations at the Welsh regional blood transfusion centre, Rhydlafar. Testing began earlier this month. The Welsh Office has issued advice to health professional groups which might come into contact with people carrying the virus.

District health authorities are providing facilities, including counselling, for people who wish to be tested for antibodies to the AIDS-associated virus. Testing of these samples is being carried out at the public health laboratories at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Bodelwyddan and the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

So far, four people have been diagnosed in Wales as having AIDS, of whom three have died. Treatment has been given at district general hospitals.

I shall be representing Welsh interests on the ministerial group recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health. Its task will be to ensure co-ordination and co-operation between all Departments concerned with AIDS matters, and the Welsh Office will be playing a full and active part in its deliberations. We are keeping the situation under continual review and will be issuing further advice.

Royal National Eisteddfod

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to grant additional cash to the Royal

National Eisteddfod authorities for 1986 and 1987; what cash he has granted for each of the years since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Grants to the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales are allocated on an annual basis following discussions between our Department and Eisteddfod officials. We are not in a position to anticipate the likely level of grant for 1986-87 or 1987-88 before such discussions have taken place.

The grants awarded since 1983 are as follows:

	£
1982-83	170,000
1983-84	180,200
1984-85	150,000
1985-86	232,000

Welsh Arts Council

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much cash has been allocated to the Welsh Arts Council in the last financial year; how many staff are currently employed by the Welsh Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	£
1984-85	7,033,320
1985-86	7,258,450

Staff in post on 1 April 1985 numbered 63.

Private Investment

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to seek to attract private funds for investment in industrial ventures in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have met and continue to meet a wide range of representatives of financial institutions, during which I take every opportunity to impress on them the advantages of investment in Wales. In addition, the Welsh Development Agency attempts to lever a maximum of private sector funds alongside its own investments, and has entered into partnership directly with the private sector through the Welsh venture capital fund.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the annual long-term unemployment rate in Wales for each of the years from 1981 up to the latest quarter, April 1985; what efforts his Department is making to seek to lower the long-term unemployment rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Latest quarterly figures relate to July 1985. Figures for July in each year from 1983 are as follows:

	Per cent.
1983	38·8
1984	41·4
1985	43·0

Figures prior to 6 October 1982 which are registrant based are not comparable. The rates are:

	Per cent.
1981	24·5
1982	35·5

The only effective way to reduce unemployment, including long-term unemployment, is by continuing with the Government's policies to revitalise the economy and promote the basis for sustained growth. In addition, the community programme is specifically designed to help the long-term unemployed and at the end of August over 10,000 people were engaged on community programme projects in Wales. As a result of the planned expansion of the programme this number will more than double by June 1986.

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest available estimate of the number of people who are self-employed in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The latest available estimate relates to June 1984, when the figure was 142,00.

Association of Welsh Youth

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much cash has been allocated to the Urdd for each of the last five financial years, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Grants made to Urdd Gobaith Cymru

	Capital £	*Revenue* £
1981-82	140,000	53,260
1982-83	145,230	55,497
1983-84	80,000	56,496
1984-85	180,000	60,296
1985-86	196,000	62,236

I very much regret the serious position in which the Urdd has been placed as a result of the present industrial action by teachers.

Workers' Education Association

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet officials of the Workers' Educational Association in Wales, by how much the Workers' Educational Association budget in Wales is to be cut in the next two financial years, what was the Workers' Educational Association's grant for the current financial year and for 1985-87 in *(a)* the northern district and *(b)* the southern district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to meet officials of the Workers Educational Association. The association has been notified that its grant from the Welsh Office, before adjustment for inflation, is to be reduced by 3·5 per cent. for the academic year 1985-86 and by four per cent. for 1986-87. No reduction in grant has been notified for 1987-88. Grants of £110,041 for the north Wales district and £159,780 for the south Wales district are being made available in the current year. No decision has been made about the division of grant between the two districts for 1986-87.

Agricultural Produce (Storage)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the location of all the EEC warehouses and private stores used in the storage of United Kingdom and European Community agricultural produce in Wales at the latest available date, and what amount of each product is being stored in each place.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

Location	*Commodity*	*Stock at 30 September*
Rhyl	Beef	207 tonnes
	Butter	1,397 tonnes
Cardiff	Beef	647 tonnes
	Butter	11,187 tonnes
Swansea	Butter	3,222 tonnes
Newport	Butter	1,040 tonnes
Milford Haven	Butter	480 tonnes
Whitland	Butter	280 tonnes
Llandysul	Skimmed Milk Powder	979 tonnes
St Clears	Skimmed Milk Powder	960 tonnes
Bedwas	Skimmed Milk Powder	2,262 tonnes

Liquid Skimmed Milk (Subsidies)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much liquid skimmed milk was subsidised for use as stockfeed in each of the last five years and 1985 to date in Wales, and what was the cost of the subsidies involved.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Separate figures for Wales are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Agricultural Produce (Storage)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will provide a complete list of United Kingdom and European Community agricultural produce in public intervention and assisted private storage in Wales, the amount held and values at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

a. Agricultural produce in intervention in Wales at 30 September:

Commodity	*Stock*	*Value (Approx) at Buying in Price*
	tonnes	*£ million*
Beef	854	2·4
Butter	17,606	33·3
Skimmed Milk Powder	4,201	4·5

b. Assisted private storage in Wales at 30 September:

Commodity	Quantity
Butter	*1,260*

The value of these stocks is not given as they are privately owned.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest available estimate of the total number of applications that have been approved for the enterprise allowance scheme in Wales since the scheme was given national coverage in August 1983.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: 7,091 applications have been approved in Wales in the period up to 30 September 1985.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Nuclear Electromagnetic Pulse

4. **Mr. Bevan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will amend his civil defence planning assumptions to take into account the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse on all Government resources including electricity, communications, transport and computers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Some guidance is already available. Further work is in hand and when this is complete the planning assumptions will, if necessary, be extended.

Racial Attacks

12. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what talks he has had with chief constables and community leaders on the prevalence of racist attacks.

Mr. Hurd: I discussed racial attacks with chief officers of police and community leaders at the meeting of my Advisory Council on Race Relations on 1 October. The Association of Chief Police Officers, whose president was present, presented a statement of guiding principles for police action on racial attacks which has now been sent to all chief constables. I very much welcome the police's renewed commitment to tackling this serious issue.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has had a number of meetings with ethnic minority organisations in recent months at which racial attacks have been discussed, and earlier this year he visited Tower Hamlets to discuss this problem with local organisations and community leaders.

55. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to discuss the number of racial attacks against coloured people with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Racial attacks were discussed at my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's first meeting with the commissioner on 11 September. The commissioner has action against racial attacks as a priority in his force goals for this year. Much police effort is devoted both to preventing such incidents and to apprehending those responsible when attacks occur.

The Home Secretary supports the high priority the commissioner is giving to this problem and his attempts to secure the co-operation of other agencies in tackling its roots.

Repatriation

13. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last issued a circular to local authorities concerning the Government's repatriation scheme under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Such a circular was issued on 12 June 1984.

Voluntary Services Unit

14. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present size of the voluntary services unit in his Department.

Mr. Waddington: The unit has 15 staff, including clerical and secretarial support.

Licence Fee Evasion (Detector Vans)

15. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the number of detector vans used by the Post Office to deter the evasion of the television licence fee.

Mr. Giles: We have now received a report from independent consultants appointed to examine the television licence collection and enforcement procedures employed by the Post Office. We shall be considering the number of detector vans in use, and their cost-effectiveness, in the light of the consultants' recommendations and of the comments of the Public Accounts Committee.

Football Grounds (Safety)

17. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on action he has taken to improve safety at football grounds.

Mr. Hurd: A detailed account was given to the House by my predecessor on 24 July [Vol. 83; c. 1045-1048] of actions taken or about to be taken in response to the findings of the interim report from the committee of inquiry into crowd safety and control at sports grounds. I am arranging for details of further action taken since then to be circulated in the *Official Report*. We now await the inquiry's final report, which we shall consider carefully when it becomes available.

Following is the information:

Since the detailed account given on 24 July of actions taken or about to be taken in response to the findings of the interim report from the committee of inquiry into crowd safety and control at sports grounds, the Government have written to local authorities, chief officers of police, chief fire officers and the main sporting bodies urging constructive responses to the interim report to achieve improvement in safety. Action has also been set in hand to improve liaison arrangements between authorities and the Health and Safety Executive and consideration is being given to the setting up of a local register of sports grounds.

The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act was passed in July. Three photographic vans — hoolivans — are now available for taking high quality video and still photographs outside grounds and the police have introduced a new system of exchanging information about supporters who have misbehaved or are likely to misbehave. The Football Trust has provided funds for the installation of closed circuit television in the grounds of first and second division clubs in the Football League and the premier division in Scotland. The Football League is introducing a partial supporter membership scheme for division 1 and 2 clubs. The working group chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister of Sport continues to discuss the implementation of particular measures to combat hooliganism and to review any new proposals that come forward.

In August, designation orders came into effect requiring all previously non-designated grounds of football clubs in the 3rd and 4th divisions of the Football League with capacity for more than 10,000 spectators and all grounds of clubs in divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League with capacity for more than 10,000 spectators to apply for certification under the provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975.

Business and Industrial Premises (Fires)

18. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires at business or industrial premises have been reported to him in each of the last three years; and how many deaths or injuries occurred.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of fires attended by local authority fire brigades at business or industrial premises in England and Wales were 19,599 in 1981, 19,779 in 1982, and 19,223 in 1983. The number of deaths resulting from these fires were 29 in 1981, 38 in 1982 and 52 in 1983. The number of non-fatal casualties were 1,085 in 1981, 1,060 in 1982 and 1,124 in 1983.

Information for 1984 is not yet available.

British Broadcasting Corporation

19. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions during the last six months he has had discussions with the governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation; and what was discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I met the Chairman of the BBC on 30 September, and my predecessor attended a lunch with the Board of Governors on 18 July. On both occasions a wide variety of matters were discussed including the establishment of the committee of inquiry into the financing of the BBC. On 7 August my predecessor also had discussions with the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Director-General of the BBC about the issues arising from the BBC programme 'Real Lives'.

Police Officers (Injuries)

20. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers retired as a result of occupational injury in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Transport)

21. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to change the arrangements and manning of the transport of prisoners from prisons to courts in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so.

Chemical Weapons

23. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to issue the chemical agent monitor detector to local authorities.

25. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct a series of regional civil defence exercises based on a scenario of an attack with chemical weapons on ports, airfields and military installations in the United Kingdom.

37. **Mr. Stefan Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any research has been carried out on the numbers of civilian casualties which may result from an attack on United Kingdom targets with chemical weapons.

46. **Mr. Hill** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue instructions on the signals to be used over the existing warning system to indicate a chemical attack.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn).

27. **Mr. Powley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will require local authorities to include tuition about the properties of, and protection against, chemical and bacteriological weapons in all civil defence volunteer training.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn). The Government do not regard the use of biological weapons in an attack against this country as likely.

40. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will direct local authorities to provide for the protection of the civilian population against the effects of chemical and biological weapons in their emergency planning.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is the duty of local authorities under the 1983 regulations to make plans to protect the population in their area against all forms of hostile attack. When the work on public protection against chemical attack is complete guidance will be issued to local authorities. The Government do not consider an attack using biological weapons is likely.

42. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether civil defence volunteers will receive training in protective measures against chemical/biological weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn). The Government do not regard the use of biological weapons in an attack against this country as likely.

48. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil defence committee is doing any work on protective measures for the civilian population against chemical weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Civil Defence Committee is developing guidelines on protection against the effects of chemical weapons.

Immigration

24. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the operation of the immigration rules.

Mr. Waddington: We believe that the operation of the immigration rules, which have themselves been approved by Parliament, properly reflects this Government's commitment to immigration control which is firm but fair.

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on changes he has introduced regarding representations by hon. Members on immigration cases.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question earlier today from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Torney).

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in view of low staff morale, increasing delays in interview casework and lengthening queues of incoming visitors from abroad, he will increase the resources devoted to the immigration service generally and at Heathrow airport in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Bangladeshi nationals, applying for visits to the United Kingdom, have been detained prior to a decision being made whether to admit or refuse, for July, August and September, broken down on a monthly basis, compared with the same period in 1984;

(2) how many Bangladeshis have genuinely absconded from temporary admission during the period July to September, compared with the same period in 1984;

(3) how many Bangladeshi visit refusals have resulted in representations from Members of Parliament for July, August and September, broken down on a monthly basis, compared with the same period in 1984;

(4) how many Bangladeshi nationals have been granted temporary admission for 10 days or more, on arrival, but on reporting back for their first interview have been refused and detained with no further temporary admission, in the months July to September, compared with the same period in 1984;

(5) how many Bangladeshis have married while on temporary admission after claiming to be here for short visits during the period July to September 1985;

(6) how many Bangladeshi nationals were refused entry for visits at Heathrow in July, August and September, broken down on a monthly basis, compared with the same period in 1984;

(7) how many Bengali interpreters were employed by the immigration service at Heathrow for the period July to October;

(8) what is his policy concerning detaining passengers awaiting decisions on applications for entry or results of representations by Members of Parliament in prison accommodation;

(9) if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a large number of visitors were detained on the night of 4 October in the Queens building, Heathrow, Harmondsworth detention centre and Ashford remand centre and, in the case of at least one visitor from Bangladesh, in a cell at the Northside police station.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many hon. Members have currently got a stop on one or more immigration cases;

(2) what proportion of stops is placed by hon. Members on behalf of immigrants or relatives of immigrants resident in their own constituencies;

(3) how many immigration cases are currently subject to a stop;

(4) how many immigration cases have been placed on stop over the last 12 months;

(5) what is his policy with regard to placing a stop on an immigration case when *(a)* the approach is made by an

hon. Member's secretary by telephone and *(b)* the approach is made by a lawyer stating that he has the agreement of an hon. Member.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many visitors entered the United Kingdom from New Commonwealth with Pakistan countries in the last 12 months for which figures are available;

(2) how many visitors left the United Kingdom to a new Commonwealth with Pakistan destination in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: During the 12 months ending May 1985, citizens of new Commonwealth countries or ofPakistan were admitted as visitors, including business visitors, on 684,000 occasions. This figure is based on information submitted by passengers on landing cards at immigration control. Corresponding information on departures from the United Kingdom is not available.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used for computer recording visitors from the new Commonwealth with Pakistan.

Mr. Waddington: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) on 24 July, column 620. The same criteria are applied to visitors from other countries as to those from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of computer recorded visitors from the new Commonwealth with Pakistan do not leave within the period allocated for the visit.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the available information does not permit a reliable estimate to be made of this proportion.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now grant exemption from the primary purpose rule to the husbands of women settled in the United Kingdom before 1973, equivalent to that given to the wives of men settled in the United Kingdom before 1973.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Emergency Planning Staff

28. **Mr. Fox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce 100 per cent. grant aid outside the rate support grant for the salaries of local authority emergency planning staff.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The items eligible for 100 per cent. grant aid were extended by the 1983 regulations to communications equipment and training, travelling and volunteers' expenses. We are assessing the effects of this and the implications of a further extension. My right hon. Friend will keep the House informed of progress.

Extradition Law

29. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be in a position to propose changes in extradition law.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary hopes to do so very shortly.

Victim Support Schemes

30. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new steps he is proposing to take to encourage the work of victim support schemes.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend is considering whether it may be possible to provide some further central Government funding for victim support. In addition to the existing grant which is made to the National Association of Victims support schemes.

Bill of Rights

31. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to introduce a Bill of Rights.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have no present plans to do so.

Civil Defence Film

32. **Mr.Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to produce a film on civil defence in 1985.

38. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new Government film on civil defence will be ready for public release.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Production of the film is taking longer than originally thought, and I now expect it to be available early next year.

Magistrates (Sentencing Power)

33. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the sentencing powers available to magistrates.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has under consideration several possibilities for specific changes in magistrates' sentencing powers, but has no plans for a general review.

Civil Defence Volunteers

34. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many local authorities do not have any civil defence volunteers in training other than scientific advisers and VAS.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is no central record of civil defence volunteers in training. We do know that 41 county councils have such volunteers and that they are either undergoing training or have received training.

Auld Report (Shop Hours)

35. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will enumerate all the representations he has so far received in respect of the recommendations of the Auld report on shop hours, detailing those in favour and those opposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Since the publication of the Auld report we have received 26 letters in favour of the committee's recommendations and 3,762 letters opposed. We do not consider that this at all reflects the considerable strength of feeling in the country at large that the restrictions on retail trading hours should be abolished.

Shop Thefts

36. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the numbers of shop thefts reported in England for the first six months of 1984 and 1985, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales up to the second quarter of 1985 were published in *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, issue 27/85 on 2 October 1985. The police in England recorded about 136,800 thefts from shops in the first six months of 1985 compared with 114,500 in the first six months of 1984.

Home Office Form IS120

39. **Mr. Normanton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will discontinue issuing Home Office form IS120 to Community nationals entering the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Visitors (Statistics)

41. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors were refused admission in the last 12 months; and how many of these came from the new Commonwealth or Pakistan.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short).

Home Beat Police Officers (Greater London)

43. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many home beat police officers are currently operating in the Greater London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 30 September 1985 there were 1,397 home beat officers in the Metropolitan police district, including 14 in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Civil Defence (Symbol)

44. **Mr. Martin Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will advise local authorities to adopt the equilateral blue triangle on an orange background as the identifying symbol for civil defence.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Adoption of this symbol is one of the requirements of the protocols added in 1977 to the 1949 Geneva convention. Although these have not yet been ratified by Her Majesty's Government the Home Secretary agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that the Government should nevertheless adopt the symbol. Appropriate guidance will be issued accordingly.

Civil Defence Plans

45. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with progress in developing civil defence plans.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is satisfied that good progress is being made. Local authorities have been asked to complete the plans required by the 1983 regulations by the end of this year, and we shall then review the position.

Animals (Experiments)

47. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps Her Majesty's Government intend to take to further reduce the number of animals used in experiments.

Mr. Mellor: We intend to introduce as soon as parliamentary time permits legislation to provide for stricter controls on scientific procedures on living animals, with the declared object of ensuring that the number of animals used and the severity of procedures are kept to the absolute minimum necessary. Details of the Government's proposals were published in the two White Papers "Scientific Procedures on Living Animals", Cmnd. 8883 and Cmnd. 9521. In addition we shall continue to encourage the development of alternatives to the use of live animals in scientific research; and to play an active role in the exploration of possible changes in international regulatory requirements which would further reduce the experimental use of live animals.

Teenage Crime

49. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to curb teenage crime.

Mr. Mellor: It is the Home Secretary's aim to ensure that the police and the courts have adequate powers for dealing with crime, including crime committed by young people. The local crime prevention initiatives supported by the Home Office, and the inclusion of crime prevention projects in the Manpower Services Commission's expanded community programme — both of which my right hon. Friend has recently announced — will be particularly relevant to crimes which tend to be committed by the young.

Licensing Laws

50. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations he has received concerning reform of the licensing laws.

Mr. Mellor: Since 4 July, we have received 20 letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents, four letters from organisations and 39 letters from members of the public about permitted opening hours for on-licensed premises. Of the 63, 44 supported relaxations in the law and 19 were opposed.

Civil Emergencies (Provision)

51. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had on provision for civil emergencies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has received representations on the implementation of the Government's manifesto commitment to amend the Civil Defence Act 1948 to allow civil defence resources to be used in peacetime emergencies. We remain firmly

committed to this, and to an all hazards approach to emergency planning, and we continue to look for an early opportunity to promote suitable amending legislation.

Juvenile Offenders (Yorkshire)

52. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the changes in prison structure in Yorkshire will have on the housing of juvenile offenders.

Mr. Mellor: The juveniles who would previously have been held in HM remand centre, Thorp Arch will in future be held in the discrete post-war wing of HM prison, Hull.

Local Government Reform

53. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase funds available to voluntary service units following the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Waddington: There are no plans to provide Home Office funding in direct substitution for any grants currently made by the Greater London council or the metropolitan counties. Voluntary bodies in receipt of such grants will be eligible for funding by the authorities which will remain. The Department of the Environment has agreed to pay grants under the Local Government Grants (Social Needs) Act 1969 for a transitional four-year period after abolition on £20 millon worth of expenditure by borough or district councils on local projects previously supported by the GLC or a metropolitan county.

European Court of Human Rights

54. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the renewal in January 1986 of the right of United Kingdom individuals to pursue claims to the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Hurd: The Government have decided to renew, for a period of five years from January 1986, their acceptance of the right of individual petition to the European Commission of Human Rights and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

Licensing Laws (Reform)

56. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on reform of the licensing laws in England and Wales following completion of the investigation by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys into drinking habits in Scotland.

Mr. Mellor: None. The full results of the survey carried out by the OPCS into extended drinking hours in Scotland have not yet been published.

Cable Television

57. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress being made in the development of the cable television industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The operators of the interim cable franchises awarded in November 1983 have faced a number of difficulties associated with developing a new industry. The Government have, however, been pleased to note the substantial progress made this autumn as five more of the systems become operational, making seven of the eleven who have reached this stage. This will be important in enlarging the market for cable programme services, in terms of both the size of the potential audience and the capacity for more channels. As a result, a number of new programme channels have already been created and wider experience is being developed of the new generation of cable systems which will help investment decisions in relation to future systems. The Cable Authority has embarked on a franchising programme designed to encourage the installation of more systems as quickly as possible; it awarded its first five franchises in August and is now considering applications for another five.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology has recently announced that his Department will be making £5 million support available over the next five years to promote the increased use of advanced interactive services over wideband cable systems. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary shares his hope that this will provide a significant boost to this important sector of the cable industry.

Sri Lankan Citizens

58. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will explain the basis upon which he has imposed a requirement upon Sri Lankan citizens resident in the United Kingdom to obtain re-entry visas before travelling abroad for any period of time; an if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: It is a normal consequence of existing visa requirements that they should apply to all nationals of the country concerned, including those resident here. In Sri Lanka's case an exception was made in respect of Sri Lankan citizens settled in the United Kingdom on 1 January 1973 who qualify for readmission as returning residents, since paragraph 77*(a)* of the immigration rules requires Commonwealth citizens to be admitted in these circumstances unless they are subject to a deportation order.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has had any discussions with the chief constable of the Merseyside police concerning policing in the inner city areas of Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are in regular contact with chief officers of police, including the chief constable of Merseyside, in connection with matters relating to the policing of their areas.

Prisoners (Accommodation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the location in London in which prisoners have been detained in police cells in 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The Metropolitan police support headquarters at Lambeth, the Highbury Corner, Camberwell Green and Horseferry Road and South Western magistrates' courts and, occasionally, a number of police stations.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* juveniles in police cells at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: On 17-18 October there was one male adult and six male young offenders aged 17 to 21 held in police cells.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest period of time a prisoner has been detained in police cells in 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Twenty-nine nights.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* juveniles in custody in police cells on each day in 1985 by location.

Mr. Mellor: Between 1 April and 18 October the available information is as follows: figures are not separately recorded for juveniles but I am not aware that there were any such cases.

	Adult males		*Females*		*Males under 21*		*Total*
	Met Police	*Other Forces*	*Met Police*	*Other Forces*	*Met. Police*	*Other Forces*	
April							
1- 2	24	—	—	—	—	—	24
2- 3	38	—	—	—	5	—	43
3- 4	—	—	3	6	—	—	9
8- 9	23	—	4	4	2	—	33
9-10	8	—	—	—	2	—	10
10-11	5	—	—	—	—	—	5
12-15	8	—	—	—	—	—	8
15-16	26	—	—	—	7	—	33
16-17	43	—	—	—	3	—	46
17-18	37	—	—	—	—	1	38
18-19	44	2	—	—	—	—	46
19-22	54	2	—	—	—	—	56
22-23	71	11	—	—	1	—	83
23-24	77	13	—	—	1	—	91
24-25	86	5	—	—	—	—	91
25-26	82	4	—	—	3	—	89
26-29	77	6	—	—	—	—	83
29-30	98	3	—	—	3	—	104
30- 1	59	—	—	3	—	3	65
May							
1- 2	29	—	—	—	11	—	40
2- 3	4	—	—	—	1	—	5
3- 7	12	—	5	—	4	—	21
7- 8	4	—	17	2	1	—	24
8- 9	—	—	8	1	4	—	13
9-10	—	—	—	1	8	—	9
10-13	—	—	6	—	—	—	6
13-14	1	—	8	1	11	—	21
14-15	15	—	1	—	—	—	16
15-16	10	—	—	—	6	—	16
16-17	7	—	—	—	6	—	13
17-20	4	—	—	—	16	—	20
20-21	9	—	—	—	—	—	9
21-22	7	—	—	—	10	—	17
22-23	12	4	—	—	4	—	20
23-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
24-28	23	5	6	31	10	—	75
28-29	7	—	—	17	17	—	41
29-30	—	—	2	—	13	—	15
30-31	17	—	5	—	3	1	26
31- 3	6	—	—	—	17	—	23
June							
3- 4	6	—	—	1	18	—	25
4- 5	—	—	—	1	4	1	6
5- 6	2	—	—	1	6	—	9
6- 7	11	—	—	1	14	4	30
7-10	13	3	—	—	14	—	30
10-11	20	—	—	1	14	—	35
11-12	—	—	6	—	10	—	16
12-13	—	—	3	—	14	1	18
13-14	12	3	—	—	8	—	23
14-17	7	9	10	2	4	1	33
17-18	39	16	10	—	9	—	74
18-19	16	19	—	—	10	1	46
19-20	18	16	7	—	14	—	55
20-21	27	16	—	—	7	9	59
21-24	19	14	9	—	7	—	49

		Adult males		Females		Males under 21		Total
		Met Police	Other Forces	Met Police	Other Forces	Met Police	Other Forces	
	24-25	60	5	7	—	7	4	83
	25-26	60	9	8	1	10	1	89
	26-27	24	3	19	—	8	7	61
	27-28	13	2	14	—	21	1	51
	28- 1	39	20	15	—	19	3	96
July								
	1- 2	47	18	10	—	18	13	106
	2- 3	59	14	24	—	25	15	137
	3- 4	41	6	26	—	21	8	102
	4- 5	35	3	27	6	22	3	96
	5- 8	—	2	27	—	20	1	50
	8- 9	—	6	25	—	5	5	41
	9-10	1	—	28	—	2	9	40
	10-11	—	—	33	1	2	6	42
	11-12	21	—	37	—	—	16	74
	12-15	1	2	30	1	7	1	42
	15-16	17	6	35	—	5	9	72
	16-17	9	2	35	—	13	8	67
	17-18	9	6	35	6	10	1	67
	18-19	21	—	35	—	5	4	65
	19-22	8	2	36	6	4	2	58
	22-23	14	9	30	7	6	7	73
	23-24	14	12	33	1	13	9	82
	24-25	5	6	35	1	8	2	57
	25-26	5	5	22	—	7	8	47
	26-29	45	21	13	—	5	4	88
	29-30	31	37	8	—	—	2	78
	30-31	17	14	10	—	15	8	64
	31- 1	6	14	2	1	—	9	32
August								
	1- 2	21	2	—	—	7	9	39
	2- 5	35	6	3	—	9	8	61
	5- 6	72	28	—	—	5	16	121
	6- 7	73	28	—	—	7	23	131
	7- 8	63	47	—	—	3	28	141
	8- 9	36	40	—	—	2	23	101
	9-12	44	42	—	—	4	18	108
	12-13	45	48	—	—	6	19	118
	13-14	58	63	—	—	4	20	145
	14-15	49	43	—	—	—	18	110
	15-16	35	43	—	—	2	15	95
	16-19	13	35	—	—	—	14	62
	19-20	12	43	—	1	10	22	88
	20-21	24	47	—	1	12	22	106
	21-22	8	38	1	—	4	29	80
	22-23	31	38	—	—	19	31	119
	23-27	2	34	—	—	3	28	67
	27-28	—	32	—	—	—	37	69
	28-29	—	31	—	—	6	27	64
	29-30	3	25	1	—	11	15	55
	30- 2	1	26	—	—	18	25	70
September								
	2- 3	—	23	—	—	32	15	70
	3- 4	—	22	3	1	35	16	77
	4- 5	—	19	—	12	35	22	88
	5- 6	4	20	—	9	35	19	87
	6- 9	—	32	—	—	34	17	83
	9-10	15	35	1	—	27	19	97
	10-11	—	38	—	1	23	19	81
	11-12	—	42	2	2	28	20	94
	12-13	11	35	9	3	28	17	103
	13-16	1	—	12	—	25	1	39
	16-17	39	—	5	—	30	—	74
	17-18	34	—	7	—	21	1	63
	18-19	16	—	5	—	22	—	43
	19-20	15	—	—	—	23	—	38
	20-23	26	—	—	—	30	—	56
	23-24	20	—	—	—	35	—	55
	24-25	40	1	—	1	47	—	89
	25-26	31	1	—	—	34	—	66
	26-27	17	1	—	1	9	—	28
	27-30	5	—	—	1	—	1	7
	30- 1	13	—	—	2	3	—	18

	Adult males		Females		Males under 21		Total
	Met Police	Other Forces	Met Police	Other Forces	Met Police	Other Forces	
October							
1- 2	17	3	—	—	1	—	21
2- 3	15	—	—	—	—	—	15
3- 4	4	—	—	—	—	3	7
4- 7	6	—	—	—	9	—	15
7- 8	20	—	—	—	14	—	34
8- 9	12	—	—	—	—	—	12
9-10	11	—	—	—	—	—	11
10-11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
11-14	17	—	—	—	—	—	17
14-15	19	2	—	2	9	—	32
15-16	35	1	—	—	1	—	37
16-17	25	—	3	—	—	—	28
17-18	—	1	—	—	6	—	7

For information about numbers during the period 1 January-31 March 1985, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question on 23 April, col. 396.

British Prisoners (Repatriation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of British prisoners held in custody abroad who have been repatriated to Britain.

Mr. Mellor: None as yet.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has refused any request of a British citizen serving a sentence abroad to be repatriated to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Re-entry Visas

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the amount of revenue received from fees for re-entry visas imposed on Sri Lankan residents in the United Kingdom from 30 May to the latest available date.

Mr. Waddington: Receipts from fees in respect of re-entry visas issued to Sri Lankan citizens in the United Kingdom during the period from 30 May 1985 to 30 September 1985 inclusive amounted to about £35,000.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a list, by country, of foreign nationals resident in the United Kingdom who require re-entry visas before travelling overseas.

Mr. Waddington: The foreign nationals who are subject to a visa requirement are specified in the immigration rules (and set out below). Any such national who is resident here requires a visa to re-enter but he may apply for a re-entry visa before travelling if that is more convenient than applying for a visa while abroad. So may a Sri Lankan citizen who will, except in certain specified circumstances, require a visa to re-enter the country.

EUROPE

Nationals of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, USSR.

ASIA

Nationals of all countries except Bahrain, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Republic of Korea, Qatar, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and, in certain circumstances, Pakistan.

AFRICA

Nationals of all countries except Algeria, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Niger, Tunisia and the Republic of South Africa.

AMERICA

Nationals of Cuba and the Argentine Republic.

Winson Green Prison

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sentenced prisoners received into Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham, in the first nine months of 1985 served less than seven days, seven to 14 days, 14 to 21 days, 21 to 28 days and one to three months, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information is given in the following table; the information for prisoners received after 30 June is not yet complete.

Prisoners initially received under sentence into Birmingham prison in the first six months of 1985 who were discharged within three months from a prison department establishment by time spent under sentence†*

	Number‡
Under 1 week	365
1 week less than 2 weeks	280
2 weeks less than 3 weeks	265
3 weeks less than 4 weeks	80
4 weeks up to 3 months	835

* Including youth custody trainees and fine defaulters
† Excluding any time spent in custody before sentence
‡ Based on records held centrally which are approximate.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sentenced prisoners were received into Her Majesty's prison Winson Green, Birmingham, in each of the first nine months of 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the following table:

Persons initially received under sentence into Birmingham prison in the first nine months of 1985 by month of reception*

	Number†
January	545
February	575
March	585
April	470
May	535
June	455
July	565
August	450
September	505

* Including youth custody trainees and fine defaulters
† Based on records held centrally, which are approximate

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home department what, in each of the first nine months of 1985, were the number of prisoners held on remand in Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham; and how this compares with the position for the same months in 1984 and 1980.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the following table.

Remand population of Birmingham prison by type of prisoner*

Number of prisoners†

	1980		*1984*		*1985*	
	Untried	*Convicted unsentenced*	*Untried*	*Convicted unsentenced*	*Untried*	*Convicted unsentenced*
January	155	100	305	60	365	55
February	120	110	335	55	380	45
March	80	110	325	50	390	60
April	90	110	295	45	385	70
May	90	115	330	70	380	55
June	85	125	290	60	390	60
July	70	105	335	55	425	65
August	90	130	345	55	410	60
September	90	155	360	50	425	70

* As at month-end

† The figures are those recorded centrally and are sounded.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted and remand prisoners at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, are sharing the same facilities.

Mr. Mellor: Other than prisoners who are category A, held under prison rule 43, or accommodated in the hospital, convicted and remand prisoners at Birmingham prison are, so far as is possible, kept separate at all times.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, are being given education packs for use in their cells;

(2) what use is made of educational facilities by prisoners at Winson Green prison, Birmingham.

Mr. Mellor: In the week commencing 14 October 1985, 51 inmates were supplied with open learning packs and a further 30 with other forms of cell study; 21 inmates attended daytime classes; and an average of 59 inmates attended on each of the three evenings on which evening classes were held. In addition the prison library was open each day for inmates' use.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, are locked in cells for 23 hours per day in an average week.

Mr. Mellor: Other than prisoners under punishment, the number of whom varies, the number of prisoners in Birmingham prison who are locked in their cells for 23 hours a day in an average week is about 10 category A prisoners and about 30 prisoners held under prison rule 43.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long each week the workshops at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, are in operation; and what percentage of prisoners are able to use them.

Mr. Mellor: In the 1984-85 year the industrial workshops were open 17 hours a week on average, employing about 10 per cent. of the inmate population. In the most recent period for which figures are available, the five weeks ended 30 September 1985, the industrial workshops were open on average for 8·6 hours a week employing some eight per cent. of the average daily inmate population of 1,029. Prison Department is examining ways in which the problems which have led to the recent reduction in working hours can be overcome.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current frequency of cell searches at Winson Green prison, Birmingham.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have served prison sentences of less than one week at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, since 31 May.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, about 15 persons were initially received into Birminghamn prison in the period 1 June to 31 August 1985 to serve sentences of less than one week.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations his Department has received from organisations representing disabled people concerning the draft Cinemas (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations his Department has received from organisations representing disabled people concerning the draft Cinemas (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department has received 36 representations from organisations and individuals about the matters contained in the proposed guidance to the draft Cinemas (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of representations received from organisations representing people who are disabled, he will amend the draft Cinemas (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of representations

received from organisations representing people who are disabled, he will amend the draft Cinemas (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The draft regulations are the same as the existing regulations, insofar as they affect disabled persons. We shall be taking account of the comments of interested bodies on the draft guidance associated with the regulations before issuing it in final form.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy on access to places of entertainment for people who are disabled.

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy on access to places of entertainment for people who are disabled.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Our policy for those licensed places of public entertainment for which my right hon. Friend is responsible is to encourage licensing authorities and management to provide the greatest possible access for disabled people consistent with the safety of all members of the public using such places.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report progress on inititives taken for the prevention of drug abuse.

Mr. Mellor: The measures we have taken are now being reflected in increases in the seizures of drugs and the number of drug traffickers prosecuted, in the current prevention campaigns and in the development of local schemes for the treatment of drug misusers. In addition, we have announced a series of new measures including more financial support towards programmes for reducing the production of drugs abroad; the appointment next year of 150 more preventive customs officers; more resources for the police at national and regional levels; and legislation to allow for the tracing, freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of drug traficking.

Pakistan (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent visit of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) to Pakistan to review the drug market in that country and the lessons learnt.

Mr. Mellor: I visited Pakistan from 12 to 20 October. I had a series of meetings in Islamabad, Karachi and Peshawar with the President, Provincial Governors, Government Ministers, representatives of a number of law enforcement and development agencies and other individuals concerned with drug misuse. The visit was most valuable in strengthening cooperation between the United Kingdom and Pakistan and in encouraging the Pakistan authorities in their efforts to combat drug trafficking. The commitment of both governments to further action is set out in a document signed in Islamabad, the text of which is reproduced below. We are most grateful to the Pakistan authorities for the cooperation in arranging this important and successful visit.

Memorandum of understanding between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on control of narcotics

I. The misuse of drugs is one of the most serious problems faced by the international community. The Governments of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland declare their total opposition to all forms of unlawful production and trafficking in narcotics. The two Governments jointly declared their determination to do everything in their power to tackle the problem and to bring such unlawful production and trafficking to an end. With this aim they will engage in full and close cooperation to tackle the problem jointly.

II. The Government of the United Kingdom welcome the measures taken by the Government of Pakistan to suppress the unlawful cultivation, production, distribution and use of drugs and to prevent the unlawful transit of drugs into international markets. They note with satisfaction the determination of the Government of Pakistan to maximise the effectiveness of prosecution and sentencing practices.

III. The Government of Pakistan welcome the contributions which the Government of the United Kingdom have made to the effective cooperation which has developed between them. They note with satisfaction that these measures have included a contribution to the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) opium poppy eradication and rural development project in the Dir region, the provision through UNFDAC of Landrovers for enforcement work in the field and the provision of training courses for Pakistan Customs officers in the United Kingdom.

IV. The two Governments declare their intention to strengthen cooperative measures in this field. With this in mind the Government of the United Kingdom will build upon the assistance already provided to the Government of Pakistan in the following ways:

A. They will increase their contribution, via UNFDAC, to the combined crop substitution, rural development and enforcement project designed to eradicate opium poppy cultivation in the Dir District of the North West Frontier Province;

B. They will provide to the Government of Pakistan technical equipment for the detection of drugs smuggled in the mails;

C. They will continue to provide training, in the areas to be jointly decided between the two Governments, of Customs officers engaged in the fight against drug trafficking;

D. They will continue to assist the Government of Pakistan to breed and train drug detecting dogs;

E. They will con the Government of Pakistan any further measures of assistance which may be identified;

F. They will consider, with the Government of Pakistan, how operational liaison between the two countries can be further improved.

V. For their part, the Government of Pakistan reaffirm their determination to take effective measures to combat the drugs problem. With this in mind, they will ensure the effective and expeditious investigation, arrest and prosecution of persons who violate their laws on the cultivation, production, trading or use of drugs. The Government of Pakistan welcome the measures taken by the Government of the United Kingdom to strengthen their existing cooperation and to fight the threat posed to both countries by this major social evil.

VI. The two Governments declare their intention to lend support to proposals for a new United Nations Convention against drug trafficking. Such a Convention should, in their view, include provision to enable all states to prosecute drug traffickers for offences wherever committed or to extradite them.

VII. The foregoing record represents the understandings reached by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan upon the matters referred to therein.

Signed in duplicate at Islamabad on 19 October 1985.

David Mellor,
For the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Shah Mohammad Khoro
For the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Police

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police authorities have requested an increase in their establishment levels; and if he will detail them and the exact numbers requested.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following eight police authorities in England and Wales have applied for increases totalling 112 posts in their police establishments for the current financial year 1985-86 or later. My right hon. Friend will shortly be considering these applications in the light of advice from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary.

Police authority/force	*Number of posts applied for*
City of London	6
Cumbria	14
Hertfordshire	33*
Northamptonshire	23†
North Yorkshire	1
Staffordshire	2
Warwickshire	29‡
Wiltshire	4

* For October 1986.
† For 1986-87.
‡ For 1986.

In addition, as my right hon. Friend indicated to the House on 21 October [c. *31*], he has set urgent work in hand to assess where there are specific needs for increases in the Metropolitan police establishment.

Birmingham (Riot Damage Claims)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims have been made under the Riot Damages Act 1886 in respect of the riots in Birmingham on 9 and 10 September; when he expects the first payments to be made; and what will be the proportion of payments met from his Department's Votes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The compensation authority under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 for the west midlands police area is the county council, which is responsible for receiving and considering claims arising from the Handsworth riot and for paying compensation. Such payments do not attract any form of Home Office grant but the county council has asked my right hon. Friend to make a contribution from central funds to the cost arising from the riot which may fall on the council and he is considering this request.

Dog Fighting (Prohibition)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to seek to amend section 1(1)*(c)* of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to prohibit dog fighting.

Mr. Meller: The promotion of dog fighting is already prohibited in section 1(1)*(c)* of the Act.

Peacock Committee (Report)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the proposed timetable for the Peacock committee to report to him.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is expected that the committee will report by July 1986.

Community Radio

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations were received from Northern Ireland regarding the granting of licences for community radio stations;

(2) what considerations influenced his decision not to include Northern Ireland as one of the potential areas for applications for community radio and to refuse a licence in respect of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In considering the locations for the 21 experimental community radio stations, my right hon. Friend took account of a range of factors, including the availability of frequencies, and the local radio services already in existence. He also had regard to the substantial number of groups expressing an interest in setting up community radio stations. Six representations were received from Northern Ireland before the announcement of the experimental locations; three have been received since then.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the application from Mr. W. J. Ryan, 26 Tern Crescent, Carrickfergus BT38 7RY, on behalf of a group of constituents of the right hon. Member for Antrim, East for a licence to operate a community radio station was considered by the community radio advisory panel.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. As explained in the reply given to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 25 July at columns 670-71, it will not be possible during the experimental phase to consider applications from community radio stations in locations other than those specified.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Dental Estimates Board

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of estimates scheduled for payment by the Dental Estimates Board in each of the months April to September inclusive; and what were the corresponding figures for the years 1981 to 1984 inclusive.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table shows the number of estimates scheduled by the Dental Estimates Board for payment to dentists in England in the periods requested. All figures are in thousands.

Month	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
April	2,464	2,630	2,505	2,367	2,386
May	2,432	2,522	2,567	2,569	2,666
June	2,460	2,562	2,596	2,755	2,549
July	2,477	2,436	2,566	2,689	2,716
August	2,122	2,416	2,472	2,445	2,841
September	2,298	2,391	2,482	2,509	2,568
Total	14,251	14,956	15,187	15,334	15,726

Dental Costs

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average fee for oral surgical procedures under item 12 of the NHS (General Dental Service) fee scale, as authorised by the Dental Estimates Board under the October 1984 fee scale.

Mr. Hayhoe: Available information relates only to those courses of treatment completed between October 1984 and March 1985. During that period the average fee in England and Wales was £17·60.

Contraceptives (Children)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to amend guidelines on the prescription of contraceptives for under age children following the House of Lords ruling in the Gillick case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make a statement on his Department's policy on the prescribing of contraceptives to girls under 16 years of age.

Mr. Hayhoe: The House of Lords has decided by three to two that our Department's guidance on contraceptive services for young people under 16 is lawful, and it has now been reinstated. It will be fully reviewed, taking into account the detail of the House of Lords' judgment and the wide range of views expressed on this issue.

The Department's guidance states that special care is needed not to undermine parental responsibility and family stability and stresses the importance of involving parents in decisions about contraception for young people under 16, and the House of Lords' judgment made it clear that it should be exceptional for a doctor to prescribe contraception for a young person under 16 without the knowledge and control of a parent.

Radiation (Medical Aspects Committee)

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, further to the reply given by his right hon. Friend on 25 July, *Official Report*, column 771, he is now in a position to give details of the chairman and members of the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government's Chief Medical Officer has appointed Professor Martin Bobrow as chairman of the committee. He is the Prince Philip Professor of Paediatric Research at Guys hospital medical school.

The 17 members are:

Professor Eva Alberman — Department of Clinical Epidemiology, The London Hospital Medical College.

Dr. Valerie Beral — Epidemiological Monitoring Unit, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Professor R. J. Berry — Department of Oncology, The Middlesex Hospital Medical School.

Professor K. M. Clayton — School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia.

Professor A. D. Dayan — Professor of Toxicology and Director DHSS Department of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College.

Dr. G. J. Draper — Childhood Cancer Research Group, Department of Paediatrics.

Professor H. J. Evans — MRC Clinical and Population Cytogenetics Unit, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh.

Professor M. J. Gardner—Professor of Medical Statistics, MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit, University of Southampton.

Dr. D. T. Goodhead—MRC Radiobiology Unit, Harwell.

Professor D. G. Harnden—Director, Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Manchester.

Professor W. Jarrett—The Veterinary School, University of Glasgow.

Professor E. G. Knox—Health Services Research Centre, Department of Social Medicine, The Medical School, University of Birmingham.

Dr. Jillian R. Mann — Consultant Paediatric Oncologist, The Childrens Hospital, Ladywood, Birmingham.

Professor J. S. Orr — Professor and Director of Medical Physics, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, University of London.

Professor J. Peto — Cancer Research Campaign Chair of Epidemiology, Institute of Cancer Research, Royal Cancer Hospital, Sutton.

Dr. T. E. Wheldon — Glasgow Institute of Radiotherapeutics and Oncology, Belvidere Hospital, Glasgow.

Professor D. R. Williams — Department of Applied Chemistry, University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology.

The chairman and members have been appointed to serve until April 1989. The committee will hold its first meeting in November.

Pound Lodge Resettlement Unit

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that the Pound Lodge resettlement unit in Willesden remains open and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 5 February at c. *548-49*. The future of Pound Lodge resettlement unit and the six other London resettlement units will be reviewed when the replacement scheme for the Camberwell unit is further advanced, and no action will be taken until then.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when health authorities completed their administrative reviews of hospital waiting lists; what is the average estimated reduction which will result from this review, and when the first half yearly figures published by his Department will reflect the effects of the review.

Mr. Whitney: The effective validation of waiting lists is a difficult management task calling for a sensitive approach to many patients, following consultation with and the full co-operation of the medical profession at local level. Many health authorities were unable to complete the exercise to an adequate standard by the original deadline of 30 March 1985. They were, therefore, asked to ensure that this was done by 30 September 1985 and to prepare plans for the regular validation of waiting lists in future. The extent of changes due to validation depends upon previous local arrangements for maintaining lists and upon how particular authorities chose to carry through the exercise, and cannot be identified separately from changes that would have occurred in any case. It is not possible, therefore, to estimate reliably the effects nationally. The effect of the full exercise will be reflected in the figures for waiting lists at 30 September 1985 which will be published in the spring of 1986.

Housing (Single Payments)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances single payments are being refused to single persons or married couples who take on the lease of a council house.

Mr. Major: It is assumed that the question refers to claims for single payments of supplementary benefit for essential furniture and household equipment. Such claims may be refused for a number of reasons: for example, there is no entitlement to supplementary benefit; there is no need for the item(s) claimed; the claimant's capital in excess of £500 is sufficient to meet the cost of the item(s); the claimant has not been in receipt of benefit for a continuous period of six months or, where he has, there is suitable, alternative furnished accommodation available in the area.

Debt Collection Agencies

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances his Department makes arrangements with debt-collection agencies for direct debit of outstanding debts; how many claimants are now covered by this procedure; whether money-lending agencies can benefit from this procedure; what check is made of the debt-collection agencies who benefit; and whether any charge is made on the debt-collection agencies for the service provided.

Mr. Major: The Department does not under any circumstances make arrangements for money to be deducted from any claimant's benefit for payment direct to a debt collection agency or a money lending agency.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each month since January 1985, the total value of supplementary benefit payments made to persons of no fixed abode in *(a)* each of the local Department of Health and Social Security offices located in the inner London area, covered by the Inner London Education Authority, *(b)* the London north region and *(c)* the London south region.

Mr. Major: The Department's local offices do not keep separate statistics on payments made to persons of no fixed abode. The information is therefore not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Public Health Laboratory Service

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of the public health laboratory service.

Mr. Hayhoe: A review of the public health laboratory service (PHLS) was undertaken by our Department as part of its normal accountability responsibilities towards non-departmental public bodies. The report's main proposal, that management responsibility for the 52 peripheral laboratories should transfer to the National Health Service, has been the subject of wide consultation. It was right to question the managerial and financial relationships between the peripheral laboratories and the district health authorities they serve, and our Department will continue to discuss these issues with the PHLS board. However, we have given careful consideration to the responses to consultation and to the board's own views. Guiding this consideration was the need to ensure that any change would be beneficial and not prejudice the service's contribution to public health and control of infectious disease. It was decided that management responsibilty should not be transferred and an announcement was made to that effect on 27 September.

The report made a number of other recommendations which were both useful and acceptable and which are being implemented by the board.

Social Services Review

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish his review of social services.

Mr. Whitney: No date has yet been fixed.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now has any proposals to extend the categories of medicines covered by the limited list.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Low-Income Families (Maternity Grant)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what special arrangements he has in mind for low-income families in the light of the proposals to limit the maternity grant to £75, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are considering the comments that have been made on the Green Paper's proposals on maternity payments and will announce our final conclusions in the forthcoming White Paper.

Social Fund (Community Care Needs)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he envisages that the scope of the proposed social fund in meeting community care needs will be widened in the longer term and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" indicates our longer term aim of promoting a more satisfactory mix of cash and services. I outlined some possibilities for future development in my speech to the joint social services annual conference on 27 September. I am placing a copy of the press release that was issued on that occasion in the Library.

Immigration Statistics

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his current estimate of those of new Commonwealth with Pakistan ethnic origin currently *(a)* with United Kingdom citizenship and *(b)* resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: Results from the 1983 labour force survey indicate that of some 2,300,000 persons usually resident in Great Britain who stated that their ethnic origin was other than white, some 1,600,000 were British nationals.

Persons born in NCWP countries, and their United Kingdom-born descendants, form the vast majority among those who stated that their ethnic origin was other than white.

Oral Mucolytics

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recommendations of the advisory committee on National Health Service drugs in its review of oral mucolytics.

Mr. Hayhoe: The advisory committee on NHS drugs completed its review of oral mucolytics at its meeting on 23 October. The advice of the committee was that, whilst oral mucolytics are of no proven therapeutic value in the treatment of chest conditions or "glue ear", an oral mucolytic agent could be a useful adjunct in the management of the very small number of children with a tracheostomy. The committee has made an additional recommendation to cover those patients with abdominal complications associated with cystic fibrosis and this will require consideration by the licensing authority. I have accepted the committee's advice and will be laying regulations in due course.

SCOTLAND

Aerial Deposition, Bonnybridge

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which experts in meteorology, cartography and geography his officials have consulted to establish the likely areas of aerial deposition, under varying local meteorological and micro-climatic conditions, of substances suspended or dissolved in smoke plumes from tall chimneys in the area within a radius of five miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire; and what steps he has taken to test theoretical models against recorded phenomena in the area.

Mr. Ancram: Warren Spring laboratory of the Department of Trade and Industry has, at the instance of my Department, studied atmospheric dispersion in central Scotland. The work, which was carried out over a four-year period, included mathematical modelling of dispersion in the atmosphere, and comparison of values of smoke and sulphur dioxide concentrations predicted by the model with measured values. The work which is relevent to pollutants other than smoke and sulphur dioxide has been reported: Warren Spring laboratory LR279(AP) "The Measurement, Assessment and Prediction of Air Pollution in the Forth Valley of Scotland — Final Report", published in 1978.

Environmental Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has, in view of the refusal of certain insurance companies to insure farmers in parts of central Scotland against livestock losses caused by environmental pollution, for the compensation at the public expense of farmers who have suffered financial loss because of atmospheric and other environmental pollution.

Mr. John MacKay: We have no such proposals.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which scientific experts he and his officials have consulted, on the basis of best knowledge worldwide, to ascertain the likely effects on human and animal health of the aerial deposition on inhabited areas and on farmland of quantities of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls; and if he will publish a bibliography of the references consulted by his officials when investigating this problem.

Mr. John MacKay: The independent review group chaired by Professor Lenihan undertook an expert and detailed examination of the Bonnybridge-Denny area with these concerns in mind. The group's report was published in February 1985. Analytical results have been sent to expert committees for toxicological assessment.

Cancer (Falkirk)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the cancer figures in the Falkirk area for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: I wrote to the hon. Member on 27 June 1985 providing information about the incidence of cancer in the postal code areas FK5, FK6 and FK7 for the years 1982 and 1983. The 1984 figures are not yet available. I would repeat the assurance given in that letter that the available figures give no cause for alarm, but will continue to be carefully watched.

Human and Animal Health

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in view of his statement of 30 April 1984, in a letter to the Society for the Control of Toxic and Troublesome Industrial Emissions, that there was an absence of fully informed toxicological advice on the results of the various reports on human and animal health problems in central Scotland, whether he will publish, in detail and also in a form accessible and intelligible to the non-scientific public, the evidence to be made available to him by the Department of Health and Social Security's independent committees, comprising experts in the field of toxicology and related disciplines, on the toxicological significance of the data on human and animal health in central Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: These committees exist principally to provide advice to Departments. When they have completed their work the Government will examine this advice and consider what further action is required, bearing in mind public concern for well-presented information on this subject.

Farm Animals (Analysis)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take to ensure that random samples of fat from beef on sale to the public in central Scotland are analysed for traces of chlorinated halogens, dioxins and furans, in parts per trillion; and whether he will publish the results of such analyses in detail and also in a form accessible and intelligible to the non-scientific general public.

Mr. John MacKay: The question of the need for analytical surveys of organic compounds which might pose a hazard to health has been referred to the working party on organic environmental contaminants in food. Such compounds would include halogenated compounds, dioxins and furans. Once I have received the working party's advice I shall consider the need for further action.

Human Morbidity Data

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will arrange for a fresh analysis of the human morbidity data seen by the Lenihan Review Group,

together with more recent data not seen by that group, on the basis of the place of residence (and therefore exposure) of patients rather than their place of treatment.

Mr. John MacKay: The information on human morbidity provided to the independent review group chaired by Professor Lenihan was prepared on the basis of place of residence of patients and not place of treatment. My right hon. Friend has no plans to undertake fresh analyses of this information.

Neo-natal Statistics (Stirling and Falkirk)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish statistics showing the number of miscarriages and terminations of pregnancies in the Stirling and Falkirk areas for the years 1982 to 1984, inclusive, analysed by mothers' place of residence, and a comparison with the numbers for previous years and an indication of the reasons for any variation from the expected normal annual number of such cases.

Mr. John MacKay: Information for Forth Valley health board's area in 1982-84 is as follows:

Year	*Miscarriages*	*Terminations*
1982	361	387
1983	320	392
1984	*	433

* Not yet available.

Details of terminations for other years may be obtained from the annual publication "Scottish Health Statistics" published by HMSO. Any information about numbers of miscarriages in previous years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Figures for terminations in the board's area in 1982-84 are generally in line with the national trend. Comparable information about miscarriages is not available.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish statistics, analysed by categories of medical defects and by place of residence of the mother, for the number of malformed and stillborn births in the Falkirk and Stirling areas for 1974 to 1984, inclusive, together with a comparison with the numbers for previous years and an indication of the reasons for any variation from the expected normal annual number of such cases.

Mr. John MacKay: Information about stillbirths in Forth Valley health board's area is as follows:

	Total still births	*Still births with congenital anomalies*
1974	49	17
1975	41	14
1976	33	12
1977	19	10
1978	19	5
1979	26	4
1980	22	2
1981	26	2
1982	23	5
1983	22	1
1984	17	1

Details of categories of medical defects and by place of residence of the mother are not available. Comparable figures for years prior to 1974 cannot be provided on the same geographical basis.

Any information about the number of malformed live births in the area could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hodgkins Disease (Bonnybridge)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what investigations he has made of the incidence of Hodgkins's disease in the area within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, for the period 1964 to 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The information sought is not available in the form in which it has been requested. Information with regard to the incidence of Hodgkin's disease in postcode ares FK4, FK5 and FK6, and for Falkirk local government district, was set out in my letter of 27 June to the hon. Member.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish detailed records of the import through Scottish airports and seaports, for the period 1982 to 1984 inclusive, of transformers, capacitors and other equipment containing polychlorinated biphenyls and destined for disposal in Scotland by incineration or dumping.

Mr. John MacKay: Importations into the United Kingdom are classified by reference to the Customs and Excise tariff. This has many separate headings for transformers, capacitors and similar electronic or electrical components. None of the headings however make specific reference to components containing polychlorinated biphenyls. Accordingly it is not possible to supply the information sought.

Soil Analysis

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those institutions in Scotland known to him which are both competent and properly equipped to analyse samples of soil, vegetation and animal tissue for the presence in parts per trillion, of polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated terphenyls, polybrominated byphenyls, dioxins and furans.

Mr. Ancram: Records are not held centrally of laboratories equipped to undertake the analyses in question. Strathclyde regional chemist is know to undertake analyses for polychlorinated biphenyls, PCTs, PBBs, dioxins and furans. Other laboratories in Scotland may well be capable of carrying out those analyses but they have not, to my knowledge, been active in the field.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the incidence of Reye's syndrome per head of population for the last 10 years in the postal code districts FK4, FK5 and FK6 of Central Region; and how these figures compare with those for the rest of Scotland and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. John MacKay: There has been one case of Reye's syndrome reported to the Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme in the postcode districts FK4, FK5 and FK6, of Central Region since surveillance began on 1 August 1981. This case was in the period 1 August 1984 to 31 July

1985. Below are given figures from the surveillance scheme for the United Kingdom including Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland.

	United Kingdom	Scotland
1981-82	30	1
1982-83	52	5
1983-84	79	4
1984-85	*52	*4

* Provisional.

The rate for Scotland in 1983-84 was 0·36 per 100,000 children under 16 years of age compared to 0·7 per 100,000 children under 16 years of age in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Milk

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maximum allowable content of polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzodioxins (especially 2,3,7,-8TCDD), and polychlorinated dibenzofurans in milk for human consumption; and what are the limits of detection for these various compounds.

Mr. John MacKay: There are no statutory levels laid down in respect of these substances. The limits of detection possible with equipment currently in use in this country, for these classes of compounds are as follows:

Compound	Limits of Detection
Polychlorinated Biphenyls	0·05 microgrammes per gramme
Polychlorinated Dibenzodioxins (including 2,3,7,8,-D TCD)	0·02 nanogrammes per gramme
Polychlorinated Dibenzofurans	0·02 nanogrammes per gramme

Waste Incinerators

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those agencies engaged in analysis of dioxin content of the flue gases from domestic refuse incinerators involved in test burns and the isomers for which samples were analysed.

Mr. Ancram: Agencies engaged in analysis of dioxin content of the flue gases from domestic refuse incinerators involved in test burns are Warren Spring laboratory, the laboratory of the Government Chemist and Harwell laboratory. The isomers for which samples have been analysed are:

2, 3, 7, 8-tetrachloro dibenzodioxin
total tetrachloro dibenzodioxins
octachlorinated dibenzodioxin
tetra-chlorinated dibenzofurans

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for the years 1982 to 1984, inclusive, the total number of unexplained deaths or deaths in unusual circumstances of cattle, sheep, horses, farm cats and dogs within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire; and what research he is conducting into the possibility that such deaths were caused by poisoning.

Mr. John MacKay: During the three years a total of 511 reports were made to the State Veterinary Service about sudden unexplained deaths in Central Region amongst cattle, sheep and horses. As it customary with these cases, tests were carried out to eliminate anthrax. Unless suspected, tests for poisoning are not conducted.

Reports on farm cats and dogs are not notified to the State Veterinary Service.

Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had regarding the application by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd to provide additional water supplies for Chapelcross nuclear power station; how much *(a)* plutonium and *(b)* tritir j 6-7um have been generated and manufactured at Chapelcross; and what proportion of these have been acquired by Government Departments.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am not aware of any proposal to increase water supplies to the Chapelcross station.

The hon. Member will be aware that the nuclear reactors at Chapelcross are available to meet defence requirements for nuclear materials. It would not, therefore, be in the national interest to reveal details of their production.

Farming Industry (Bad Weather Aid)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the value and the method of distribution in Scotland of the aid which has been announced for sectors of the farming industry which have been affected by bad weather.

Mr. John MacKay: An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Stock Rearing Farmers

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he proposes to assist those stock rearing farmers who do not qualify for hill livestock compensation allowances.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government are pledged to provide help where it is most needed. Details of the assistance to be provided will be announced as soon as possible.

Hill Livestock Compensation Allowances

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will increase the amount and ensure prompt payment of hill livestock compensation allowances in the light of this season's harvest outturn.

Mr. John MacKay: This year's annual review of farming in the hills and uplands is in progress. Rates of HLCA will be determined in the light of the review, which will take all relevent factors into account. The allowances will be paid as speedily as circumstances allow.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what volume of *(a)* high-level radioactive waste, *(b)* intermediate-level radioactive waste and *(c)* low-level solid waste would be expected to be generated annually if the proposed European fast reactor demonstration reprocessing plant becomes operational.

Mr. Ancram: In their document, "Supplementary information (including certain environmental issues) relating to the outline planning application to construct a

European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant at Dounreay", the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels plc. indicated that they would expect the volumes of high-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste arisings to be 85m^3 per annum in liquid form (12m^3 per annum after solidification) and 170m^3 per annum in solid form respectively. The applicants have not indicated the expected volume of low-level solid waste arisings.

PAYMASTER GENERAL

Employment and Training (Swindon)

Mr. Coombs asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of people benefiting from special employment and training measures at the latest available date in the Swindon constituency; and if he will list the measures and the numbers affected in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: Some 3,600; although because of the various bases on which local information is collated, an unknown proportion are in areas outside my hon. Friend's constituency. The estimates for the individual measures are set out in the table:

	Number
Community Industry	90
Community Programme	1,530
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	760
Job Release Scheme	150
Job Splitting Scheme	1
Young Workers Scheme	130
Youth Training Scheme	950

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Golding asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of factories engaged on duties in north Staffordshire for each year since 1978.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Factory inspectors based at the Marches area office of the Health and Safety Executive are responsible for the counties of Staffordshire, Salop and Hereford and Worcester. Separate figures for north Staffordshire are not available. The numbers of factory inspectors in the Marches area at 1 October each year were:

	Number
1978	27
1979	28
1980	27
1981	25
1982	24
1983	23
1984	24
1985	24

Ionising Radiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General when he plans to lay new regulations governing legally permissible doses of ionising radiation; and in what procedural form the introduction of such regulations will be made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 were laid on 4 September 1985. They are subject to negative resolution.

International Labour Organisation (Conventions)

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will list the International Labour Organisation conventions, indicating to which ones the United Kingdom is a signatory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The International Labour Organisation has adopted 161 conventions, of which the United Kingdom has ratified, and is currently bound by 70. A list of the conventions follows in which those currently in force for the United Kingdom are indicated by an asterisk.

List of International Labour Conventions indicating those to which the United Kingdom is a signatory

No. and Title of Convention
1. Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919
*2. Unemployment Convention, 1919
3. Maternity Protection Convention, 1919
4. Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919
*5. Minimum Age (Industry) Convention, 1919
6. Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1919
*7. Minimum Age (Sea) Convention, 1920
*8. Unemployment Indemnity (Shipwreck) Convention, 1920
9. Placing of Seamen Convention, 1920
*10. Minimum Age (Agriculture) Convention, 1921
*11. Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921
*12. Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921
13. White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921
14. Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921
*15. Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention, 1921
*16. Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921
*17. Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention, 1925
18. Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention, 1925
*19. Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925
20. Night Work (Bakeries) Convention, 1925
21. Inspection of Emigrants Conventions, 1926
*22. Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention, 1926
*23. Repatriation of Seamen Convention, 1926
*24. Sickness Insurance (Industry) Convention, 1927
*25. Sickness Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1927
*26. Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention, 1928
27. Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels) Convention, 1929
28. Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention, 1929
*29. Forced Labour Convention, 1930
30. Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930
31. Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention, 1931
*32. Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention (Revised), 1932
33. Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) Convention, 1932
34. Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1933
*35. Old-Age Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1933
*36. Old-Age Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1933
*37. Invalidity Insurance (Industry, etc) Convention, 1933
*38. Invalidity Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1933
*39. Survivors' Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1933
*40. Survivors' Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1933
41. Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934
*42. Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention (Revised), 1934
43. Sheet-Glass Works Convention, 1934
*44. Unemployment Provision Convention, 1934
*45. Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935
46. Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention (Revised), 1935
47. Fourty-Hour Week Convention, 1935
48. Maintenance of Migrants' Pension Rights Convention, 1935

	No. and Title of Convention
49.	Reduction of Hours of Work (Glass-Bottle Works) Convention, 1935
*50.	Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention, 1936
51.	Reduction of Hours of Work (Public Works) Convention, 1936
52.	Holidays with Pay Convention, 1936
53.	Officers' Competency Certificates Convention, 1936
54.	Holidays with Pay (Sea) Convention, 1936
55.	Shipowners' Liability (Sick and Injured Seamen) Convention, 1936
*56.	Sickness Insurance (Sea) Convention, 1936
57.	Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention, 1936
58.	Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1936
59.	Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1937
60.	Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) Convention (Revised), 1937
61.	Reduction of Hours of Work (Textiles) Convention, 1937
62.	Safety Provisions (Building) Convention, 1937
*63.	Convention concerning Statistics of Wages and Hours of Work, 1938
*64.	Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939
*65.	Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939
66.	Migration for Employment Convention, 1939
67.	Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1939
*68.	Food and Catering (Ships' Crews) Convention, 1946
*69.	Certification of Ships' Cooks Convention, 1946
*70.	Social Security (Seafarers) Convention, 1946
71.	Seafarers' Pensions Convention, 1946
72.	Paid Vacations (Seafarers) Convention, 1946
73.	Medical Examination (Seafarers) Convention, 1946
*74.	Certification of Able Seamen Convention, 1946
75.	Accommodation of Crews Convention, 1946
76.	Wages, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention, 1946
77.	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946
78.	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946
79.	Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946
*80.	Final Articles Revision Convention, 1946
*81.	Labour Inspection Convention, 1947
*82.	Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
*83.	Labour Standards (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
*84.	Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
*85.	Labour Inspectorates (Non-metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947
*86.	Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1947
*87.	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948
88.	Employment Service Convention, 1948
89.	Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948
90.	Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948
91.	Paid Vacations (Seafarers) Convention (Revised), 1949
*92.	Accommodation of Crews Convention (Revised), 1949
93.	Wages, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1949
94.	Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949
95.	Protection of Wages Convention, 1949
96.	Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (Revised), 1949
*97.	Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949
*98.	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949
*99.	Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery (Agriculture) Convention, 1951
*100.	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951
*101.	Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Convention, 1952
*102.	Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952
103.	Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952
104.	Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1955

	No. and Title of Convention
*105.	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957
106.	Weekly Rest (Commerce and Office) Convention, 1957
107.	Indigenous and Tribal Populations Conventions, 1957
*108.	Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, 1958
109.	Wages, Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1958
110.	Plantations Convention, 1958
111.	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958
112.	Minimum Age (Fishermen) Convention, 1959
113.	Medical Examination (Fishermen) Convention, 1959
*114.	Fishermen's Articles of Agreement Convention, 1959
*115.	Radiation Protection Convention, 1960
*116.	Final Articles Revision Convention, 1961
117.	Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962
118.	Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962
119.	Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963
*120.	Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964
121.	Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964
*122.	Employment Policy Convention, 1964
123.	Minimum Age (Underground Work) Convention, 1965
*124.	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965
125.	Fishermen's Competency Certificates Convention, 1966
*126.	Accommodation of Crews (Fishermen) Convention, 1966
127.	Maximum Weight Convention, 1967
128.	Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967
129.	Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969
130.	Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention, 1969
131.	Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970
132.	Holidays with pay Convention (Revised), 1970
*133.	Accommodation of Crews (Supplementary provisions) Convention, 1970
134.	Prevention of Accidents (Seafarers) Convention, 1970
*135.	Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971
136.	Benzene Convention, 1971
137.	Dock Work Convention, 1973
138.	Minimum Age Convention, 1973
139.	Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974
*140.	Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974
*141.	Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975
*142.	Human Resources Development Convention, 1975
143.	Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975
*144.	Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976
145.	Continuity of Employment (Seafarers) Convention, 1976
146.	Seafarer's Annual Leave with Pay Convention, 1976
*147.	Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976
*148.	Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977
149.	Nursing Personnel Convention, 1977
*150.	Labour Administration Convention 1978
*151.	Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978
152.	Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work) Convention, 1979
153.	Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1979
154.	Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981
155.	Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981
156.	Workers with Family Responsibility Convention, 1981
157.	Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982
158.	Termination of Employment Convention, 1982
159.	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983
160.	Labour Statistics Convention, 1985
161.	Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985

* Conventions which the United Kingdom has ratified and by which it is currently bound.

Mr. Bellingham asked the Paymaster General what action the Government have taken with regard to the ratification of International Labour Organisation Convention No. 23 (Repatriation of Seamen) and No. 126 (Accommodation of Crews (Fishermen)).

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's ratification of convention No. 23 was registered with the Director General of the International Labour Office on 3 June 1985 and that of convention No. 126 on 13 August 1985.

GEC (Redundancies)

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he plans to meet representatives of either management or trade unions from the General Electric company to discuss the unemployment implications of the recently announced 1,000 redundancies in Coventry and Kirkcaldy.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have no plans to do so.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the most recent figures for the numbers of jobs created since January 1983 after taking account of second jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

Between December 1982 (figures are not available for January 1983) and June 1985 (the latest date for which comprehensive quarterly figures are available) the Great Britain employed labour force increased by 610,000. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed and Her Majesty's Forces.

The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified, but estimates from the labour force surveys suggest an increase of 60,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984 (the latest date for which estimates are available) in the number of people with a second job as an employee.

The employment estimates do not include second jobs when they are held as self employed.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of long-term unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 11 July 1985, the latest date for which analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over one year was 1,326,884.

Community Programme

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Paymaster General how many places are available on the community programme during the current year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The community programme is being expanded to 230,000 filled places by the end of May 1986. At the end of September (the latest date for which statistics are available) there were 151,000 filled places on the programme.

Dockworkers (Severance Payments)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Paymaster General what new arrangements have been made for the financing of severances among registered dockworkers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As a result of discussion with the National Association of Port Employers new arrangements for the funding of severance payments to registered dockworkers in all ports have now been agreed on the following basis:

1. The Government will pay 100 per cent. of the future severance costs until end March 1986, 75 per cent. until end March 1987 and 50 per cent. until end March 1988, all payments related to a maximum of £25,000 per registered dockworker severed. The balance will be paid by the employer concerned.
2. Where an employer de-registers in any port the Government will examine the circumstances with a view to grant-aiding 100 per cent. of the registered dockworker severance costs up to the £25,000 maximum.
3. Interest and capital repayments on the outstanding Government loans to the National Dock Labour Board of £44·5 million will not be sought pending an opportunity to seek Parliamentary approval for the write-off of the loans.

As a condition of this assistance the board has undertaken with the agreement of the employers to service and repay its commercial debt to Barclays Bank (currently about £11.5 million) to a point where by end-March 1990 the Bank releases the Government from its existing contingent liability for this debt.

For this purpose the employers have undertaken to raise £1 million over the rest of the present financial year and £2 million a year thereafter. Separately, the industry has agreed to use a substantial surplus in its pension fund to provide improved pension arrangements with enhancements for early retirement.

Legislative authority for this Government expenditure in ports other than Liverpool and London is provided by section 1 of the Ports (Finance) Act 1985. Financial provision will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the labour market services Vote (Class IV, Vote 12). Pending Parliament's approval, the urgent expenditure, estimated at £5 million, will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will continue to contribute, but on the same basis as for other ports, to the cost of severances in Liverpool and London.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Famine Relief (Ethiopia)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement updating the information contained in his reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, *Official Report*, 24 July, c. *542*, concerning grain supplies and supplementary food and edible oil requirements in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: The estimated total cereal requirement for famine relief in Ethiopia in 1985 remains at 1·5 million tonnes. So far some 934,000 tonnes have been delivered.

Supplementary food needs (skimmed milk powder and high protein biscuits) are now estimated at about 130,000 tonnes; substantially more than this has been delivered or is being shipped.

Edible oil requirements are not known. 41,000 tonnes have been pledged of which 33,000 tonnes have been delivered.

Tropical Development and Research Institute

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to fill

the post of Director of the Tropical Development and Research Institute; what minimum qualifications he expects of candidates in *(a)* science and *(b)* tropical experience; and what advertisement has been, or is being, given to the vacancy.

Mr. Raison: An open competition was held earlier this year to try and identify a suitable successor to the present Director of the Tropical Development and Research Institute who is approaching retirement. The vacancy was widely advertised in the appropriate journals. The competition unfortunately failed to produce anyone who was judged to have the necessary scientific and administrative qualities for the post. Since the new director will face the major task of managing the relocation of the component parts of the institute on a new site at Chatham in 1987-88 an assistant secretary, Mr. G. A. Beattie, in the Overseas Development Administration has been appointed, on temporary promotion, to the post for the next two to three years. The aim will be for this officer to be succeeded in due course by an officer with a scientific background.

Latin America (Aid)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the bilateral and multilateral aid given to each country in Latin America in each of the last three years, stating in each case *(a)* the conditions attached to such aid and *(b)* the institutions through which the multilateral aid was co-ordinated.

Mr. Raison: The following is gross United Kingdom bilateral and multilateral aid to Latin America for the period 1982 to 1984. Multilateral aid figures for 1984 are not yet available.

£ thousand

	1982			*1983*			*1984*	
	United Kingdom bilateral aid	*of which loans*	*Multilateral aid attributable to United Kingdom*	*United Kingdom bilateral aid*	*of which loans*	*Multilateral aid attributable to United Kingdom*	*United Kingdom bilateral aid*	*of which loans*
Latin America								
Argentina	2	—	230	—	—	414	—	—
Belize	2,885	—	240	6,098	3,408	81	5,971	2,305
Bolivia	988	—	1,270	1,199	—	1,521	1,182	—
Brazil	9,960	—	1,030	5,574	—	846	7,780	961
Chile	675	—	100	442	—	102	257	—
Colombia	617	—	710	635	—	780	460	—
Costa Rica	486	5	270	1,838	1,373	508	1,666	1,377
Cuba	—	—	180	—	—	311	—	—
Dominican Republic	139	—	500	176	—	550	65	—
Ecuador	1,046	362	480	783	90	965	916	383
El Salvador	13	—	560	—	—	591	205	—
French Guiana	—	—	1,590	—	—	n.a.	—	—
Guatemala	4	—	330	—	—	405	—	—
Guyana	1,724	1,433	1,340	1,555	1,080	736	419	41
Haiti	1	—	1,590	19	—	2,949	8	—
Honduras	2,272	2,029	2,120	6,670	6,335	2,042	3,446	3,090
Mexico	34,334	—	310	2,827	—	437	517	—
Nicaragua	49	—	1,670	64	—	1,627	9	—
Panama	62	—	220	43	—	415	49	—
Paraguay	3,263	—	320	1,281	—	323	207	—
Peru	676	—	1,010	4,427	—	1,996	476	—
Surinam	1	—	310	—	—	171	—	—
Uruguay	11	—	70	16	—	62	14	—
Venezuela	2	—	90	3	—	n.a.	—	—

The content of country bilateral programmes is decided in consultation with recipient governments and various conditions apply. It is our normal practice to tie bilateral aid to the purchase of British goods and services although this does not apply to loans from the Commonwealth Development Corporation. Grants from the aid and trade provision are provided in association with commercial credits and further and specific conditions apply. Britain does not normally attach specific conditions to aid made available through multilateral institutions.

Figures for multilateral aid attributable to Britain reflect the proportion of the British contribution to the general resources of the organisations concerned and not for use in individual countries.

The principal institutions through which multilateral aid was channelled are the World Bank Group, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Community, the United Nations and its agencies and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there has been any revision in the aid and trade provision budget for the current financial year.

Mr. Raison: No. The level of the aid and trade provision budget remains at £66 million for the current financial year.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the review of the aid and trade provision is now complete.

Mr. Raison: Consideration of the various issues relating to ATP is well advanced, and a statement will be made shortly.

Famine (Aid)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a response to the representations made to Her Majesty's Government by the World Development Movement regarding aid to overcome famine.

Mr. Raison: As I announced on 22 October to the mass lobby of Parliament organised by the World Development Movement and the churches, we spent over £89 million on famine relief for Africa in 1984-85 from the aid programme; this year we will provide at least a further £75 million.

The Government will continue to play their part, alongside our European Community partners and the multilateral and voluntary agencies, in the essential international relief efforts as they continue next year.

Cereals Research

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount of money allocated from the aid budget for research and development of new and more prolific strains of wheat, maize and other cereals suitable for growing in underdeveloped countries, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Raison: Britain contributes, as follows, to the annual budgets of a number of international agricultural research centres (IARCs) whose work is devoted wholly or partly to research on cereals for use in developing countries. In the case of centres whose mandate includes crops or topics other than cereals it is not possible to identify the budget for, and British contribution to, cereals alone.

British Contribution £'000

IARC	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
International Centre for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat (CIMMYT)	230	330	380	400	460
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)	625	640	660	680	725
International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) (major programme on rice)	230	300	310	330	400
International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) (major programme on cereals)	150	300	350	370	490
International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) (Major programmes on sorghum and pearl millet)	480	640	660	680	800
International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) (major programmes in rice and maize)	330	390	400	400	400

We also finance research projects in many agricultural sectors both through our research and development programme and through our country programmes. Some of these projects are concerned solely with one or more aspects of cereal crop improvement but many tackle this within a wider ranging project, dealing with eg farming systems or embracing other non-cereal crops. It is not possible to separate the costs of the components of these projects. Expenditure on projects concerned wholly or in part with cereal improvement has been:

	£
1980-81	592,000
1981-82	667,600
1982-83	1,041,800
1983-84	1,473,800
1984-85	1,402,000

A copy of the report on research and development is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount allocated from the aid budget for research and development at Kew Gardens of new cereal crops suitable for growing in harsh conditions in Africa for each of the last five years.

Mr. Raison: We have not financed research projects carried out by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in the field of cereal crops.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sri Lankan Citizens

59. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people in Sri Lanka have applied for a visa to enter the United Kingdom; and how many such applications have been granted.

Mr. Eggar: The visa requirement for Sri Lankan nationals was introduced on 30 May. From that date until 30 September the High Commission in Colombo received 4,774 visa applications from Sri Lankans and issued 4,156 visas.

Elena Gurevich

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* as much information as is in his possession about Elena Gurevich of the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The case of Elena Gurevich and her family is known to us, although our information is somewhat incomplete. Miss Gurevich, who is now 21, and her parents have been trying to leave the Soviet Union for Israel since 1974. Their applications have, however, been consistently refused on the grounds that Mrs. Gurevich has

had access to classified information as a messenger in an institute which tracked sputniks. We are not aware of any recent reapplication by the family.

Contadora Treaty

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with other European Economic Community countries concerning the revised draft Contadora treaty; what recommendations he will be making in this respect to the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg; and if he will place a copy of the revised draft in the Library.

Mr. Rifkind: Our position is as stated in the declaration made by Community Foreign Ministers on 10 September in Luxembourg which called on the States of Central America to come to an agreement that allows for a peaceful, global and verifiable solution. I am arranging for a copy of the revised draft Contadora Act to be placed in the Library of the House.

Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to send observers to the forthcoming elections in Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent exchanges have been held with Guatemala, directly and indirectly, concerning *(a)* the situation of Belize, *(b)* the re-establishment of consular relations and *(c)* the refusal to allow United Kingdom Members of Parliament to visit Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: There have been no direct or indirect exchanges on *(a)* or *(b)* since last February when British officials attended talks between Belize and Guatemala as observers. In the absence of diplomatic or consular relations with Guatemala representations on *(c)* were made in the summer at the request of the hon. Members concerned via other Governments with good relations with both the United Kingdom and Guatemala.

Business Activities (Deregulation)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all proposals made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community for the deregulation of business activities; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the document submitted by the United Kingdom to European Economic Community directorates concerning the modification of existing directorates in the areas of health and safety, employment protection, consumer protection, environmental protection and transport.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom has made no formal proposals. The document referred to was a working paper designed to help the Commission in its work on deregulation. Our approach was set out in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) laid before Parliament in July 1985.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any further representations to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I last raised the case of Raoul Wallenberg during my meeting with Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kornienko in Moscow at the end of July. This was the third occasion on which I have done as in so many years. Regrettably, Mr. Kornienko chose not to comment on the matter. Nevertheless, we will continue to assist the Swedish Government in seeking to establish more clearly what happened to Mr. Wallenberg.

South Africa

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he intends to make to the Government of South Africa about progress towards the achievement of human rights for blacks in South Africa and progress towards the dismantlement of apartheid.

Mr. Rifkind: We take every opportunity to impress upon the South African Government our deep concern about human rights questions and the urgent need to dismantle apartheid. This concern was clearly reflected in the important statements by EC Ministers at Luxembourg on 10 September and the accord reached by Commonwealth Heads of Government in Nassau on 20 October.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people currently residing in South Africa, as South African citizens, are entitled to British passports under United Kingdom immigration rules.

Mr. Rifkind: Eligibility for a British passport is determined by the British Nationality Act not by the immigration rules.

It is estimated that there are between one and two million persons of British birth or descent resident in South Africa. It is not known how many are dual South African-British nationals.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those Governments which expressed *(a)* pleasure and *(b)* disappointment at the cancellation of the recent meeting between him and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Renton: There is widespread disappointment that the opportunity presented by the proposed meeting between my right hon. and learned Friend and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation has been missed.

Tristan da Cunha

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes and developments have been decided upon and are being considered in Tristan da Cunha as a result of the recent visit by His Excellency the Governor of St. Helena and dependents.

Mr. Eggar: The Governor's visit to Tristan da Cunha in April 1985 was for routine familiarisation and liaison with the territory for which he is responsible.

Pakistan

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) on what occasions Ministers or officials of his Department have visited Pakistan since 1977;

(2) for what purposes Ministers or officials of his Department have visited Pakistan since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: In recent years Foreign and Commonwealth Ministers and officials have visited Pakistan on a number of occasions for the purpose of fostering various aspects of our bilateral relationships. Visits have been made by the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Carrington in March 1981; the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), in November 1982; the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), in January 1983; the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Baroness Young, in March 1984; the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Minister for Overseas Development; my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), in July 1984; and the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), in January 1985. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible with details of visits prior to 1981.

Middle East

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the statement on the middle east which one of the members of the proposed Palestine Liberation Organisation delegation, Mr. Milhen, declined to sign.

Mr. Renton: The agreed statement which we expected the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation would issue stated that

"the members of the joint delegation reiterated their personal support for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council. They stated that in accordance with these resolutions a settlement should recognise the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination within the context of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, as well as the right to secure existence of all states in the area, including Israel within its 1967 borders. They confirmed their opposition to all forms of terrorism and violence from whatever source."

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at what stage and in what circumstances he expects to meet with representatives of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present for meetings with Palestinians. We shall continue to encourage the leaders of moderate Palestinian opinion to work for a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute through negotiation.

Territorial Integrity (Government Policy)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the acquisition of territory by force.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Charter commits member states to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state (article 2.4). We believe all states should abide by that commitment.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Projects (Urban Development Grant)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all housing projects which have received an offer of urban development grant since the scheme began; and, for each project, what is the amount of public sector financial support and the total private sector investment involved.

Sir George Young: Forty three housing schemes have been approved for urban development grant since 1982. These would entail public expenditure of £18·5 million and private sector investment of £58·9 million. A further eight offers of grant have not been taken up. A full list of approved schemes is regularly placed in the Library of the House and I am sending a copy to the hon. Member.

Planning Applications

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce legislation to require all planning application decisions in local government to be subject to elected member control and determination and to prohibit planning applications being decided by paid officials acting alone under delegated powers;

(2) if he will introduce legislation declaring null and void local government planning application decisions which have been determined by paid officials acting alone under delegated powers;

(3) what information he has as to how many local authorities delegate the power to decide planning applications to one or more officials of the authorities; and if he will identify the local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has no information on the number of local authorities which delegate to officers the power to decide planning applications.

Delegation to officers has advantages for the speedy handling of applications; the extent and circumstances of deregulation are, however, matters for each authority to decide for itself.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require local government planning authorities to publish in the minutes of relevent meetings the reasons for their refusal of individual planning applications.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local planning authorities are already required by article 7 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 to state reasons for their decision in the notice to the applicant of their decision on a planning application.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation requiring local government planning authorities to circulate to members of the appropriate committees full details of all objections lodged to individual planning applications and to prohibit the practice of officials being allowed to summarise objections at their discretion.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Whether or not an officer summarises objections for the benefit of members is a question of the internal management of the council's business which members must decide.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce legislation requiring minutes of planning committees and sub-committees of planning committees to be available for public inspection within seven days of the relevant meeting;

(2) if he will introduce legislation allowing applicants and objectors to planning applications the right to be present at relevant meetings where their applications or objections are being considered;

(3) if he will introduce legislation requiring all planning application decisions to be made in public, with the Press and the public able to attend the relevant meetings;

(4) what information he has as to how many local authorities exclude the press and public from meetings when planning application decisions are made; and if he will identify such local authorities;

(5) what information he has as to how many local government planning authorities delegate planning applications to sub-committees which meet with the press and public excluded; and if he will identify such authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available. The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 which comes into force on 1 April 1986 provides, subject only to specific statutory exceptions, for access by both the public and the press to council, committee and sub-committee meetings and for the minutes of such meetings to be open to public inspection.

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation allowing objectors to planning applications which are granted to make representations to him within 28 days of the planning permission being granted and providing for planning permissions not to be operative during this 28 day period or until he has considered any such representations, whichever is the later.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Such legislation would conflict with the presumption, reiterated in circular 14/85, in favour of allowing development unless it would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance; and, in making the Secretary of State the ultimate arbiter of the 86 per cent. of planning applications which are approved by local planning authorities, it would greatly increase costs and delay.

Planning Appeals (South Lakeland District Council)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals he has considered in respect of planning decisions of the South Lakeland district council for each of the years 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and how many of these appeals were upheld after a public inquiry.

Mrs. Rumbold: The statistics requested are being collated and I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as they are available.

Local Councillors (Misconduct)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many local authorities have a special standing committee whose principal term of reference is to deal with the misconduct of elected members; and if he will identify such local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for each local authority to determine the nature and terms of reference of its committees. My Department does not collect information of the nature to which my hon. Friend refers.

Local Authorities (Discrimination)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer of 19 November 1984, *Official Report*, column *3*, he will make a further statement on any proposals that he is considering to prevent local authorities from discriminating against private companies for reasons which have nothing to do with the quality of their work.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Thameside Planning Consultative Committee

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to him concerning the retention of the Thameside planning consultative committee under the aegis of the London Planning Commission.

Mr. Tracey: None. The question would be for the joint planning committee for Greater London itself to decide.

Ministry of Defence Houses

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the reply of 17 September by his Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the right hon. Member for Brent East concerning empty Ministry of Defence houses.

Sir George Young: Yes, the text of my letter is as follows:—

EMPTY HOUSES

You sent Ian Gow a copy of your letter of 30 August to Michael Heseltine about empty MOD housing. Most of the points you raise are for MOD to answer but I thought I should reply as well.

I am, of course *extremely* concerned to see that the number of empty Government houses is kept to a minimum. A certain degree of vacancy is necessary for operational flexibility but my officials, both in PSA and in DOE, are in very frequent contact with their counterparts in MOD (and in other Government Departments with a housing stock) to see that all reasonable steps are taken to put any surplus to an alternative use as quickly as possible. My predecessor here also had frequent exchanges with Ministerial colleagues, both in the Ministry of Defence and other Departments with housing stocks, on this very point.

One recent improvement which we have persuaded MOD to introduce is to consider houses which are likely to be temporarily empty for 6 months or more to local authorities on lease. The previous minimum qualifying period was 18 months. Currently there are about 400 such houses let for various periods to several different local authorities. It is reasonable to expect that more temporarily empty MOD houses may well be offered to local authorities as a result of the recent change in the minimum qualifying period.

Acting for MOD, PSA sold 346 MOD houses in the 4 months from the end of March to the end of July this year. In the 4 months

before that, PSA sold another 351 MOD houses. I can assure you that every effort is devoted to the disposal of surplus property and that a very high degree of priority is accorded to the sale of empty houses. In the last 3 years of so, over 200 surplus MOD houses have been sold to 8 different local authorities. In the same period, almost 4,000 surplus MOD houses have been sold altogether by PSA.

I hope you will find these statistics encouraging. Selling surplus MOD houses or allowing local authorities to lease temporarily surplus MOD houses is a task which will continue for some time yet but it is one which is being accorded great priority.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Stanley at the Ministry of Defence."

Rosehill Estate, Willenhall

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when a Minister from his Department intends to visit the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 26 July at column 886. The estate has already been visited by the Department's regional housing controller. I hope to be able to do so myself at some future date.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will place in the Library the report proposed by the west midlands regional controller of his Department on the state of the properties in Rosehill estate, Willenhall, west midlands, arising from the visit made on 6 August;

(2) if he will now state the recommendations made by the regional controller of his Department regarding the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, arising from his visit on 6 August.

Sir George Young: The regional controller's report was in the form of advice to Ministers. It was not intended for publication and it would not be appropriate to do so. Among his recommendations, the regional controller advised that the Department's urban housing renewal unit should visit the estate in order to assess the problems and suggest measures for dealing with them. A visit by UHRU has now been arranged.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations were made on 6 August by the Walsall metropolitan borough council to the west midlands regional controller of his Department regarding finance in 1986-87 to undertake the modernisation of properties on the Rosehill estate, Willenhall.

Sir George Young: At the meeting on 6 August and at a subsequent meeting with officials to discuss its housing investment programme for 1986-87, Walsall borough council described the resources it feels it needs to undertake the range of its housing responsibilities: this included, as a major priority identified by the council, the modernisation of all its inter-war properties.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the main defects in the properties in the Rosehill estate, Willenhall; what is the likely cost of the work needed to be undertaken; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The main defects affecting the properties are damp and condensation and a general lack of repair and modernisation. The council has estimated the total cost of repairing and modernising the estate to be about £3 million.

Housing Modernisation (Walsall)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to seek to ensure that the Walsall metropolitan borough council has sufficient funding in 1986-87 to modernise its pre-war properties.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 21 October at column 87. The condition of the council's housing stock will be fully taken into account when decisions are taken about the allocation of housing resources for 1986-87.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of properties owned by the Walsall metropolitan borough council awaiting modernisation or major repair work.

Sir George Young: This information is contained in Walsall borough council's bid for housing investment programme resources and its housing strategy statement 1986-87, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Housing Investment (Walsall)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the criteria used in determining the current housing investment programme allocation for Walsall metropolitan borough council.

Sir George Young: Housing investment programme allocations are made in two stages: first to the regional level and then to individual local authorities. Distribution to the regional level is based on the generalised needs index, made up of 12 indicators of housing need. Allocations of the regional total to individual authorities are made partly using the GNI and partly through the local discretionary element, which enables the Secretary of State to take into account any special local factors which are brought to his attention.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will approve any further grants from the Greater London council to the Greater London enterprise board under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Mrs. Rumbold: Before considering any proposals for further GLC grant aid to the Greater London enterprise board my right hon. Friend has asked the GLC to provide firm evidence of commitments to future funding by London borough councils, information about the board's future requirements for financial support and an independent assessment of the board's ability to continue as a going concern. These have not yet been provided.

My right hon. Friend would of course have to be satisfied that further expenditure by the GLC would be both expedient and in the interests of the Greater London area or its inhabitants.

Nuclear Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when, and by what means, he intends to announce the proposed sites which the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive wish to investigate as possibly suitable for the disposal of short-lived and medium-term nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Canning Street, Liverpool (Conservation)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what extra resources will be available to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission during 1985-86 to carry out their programme of conservation in Canning street, Liverpool; and what cash limit changes he proposes to make.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has decided that it would be appropriate to make extra provision to the HBMC in order to complete phase 1 out of the resources allocated to the Merseyside task force for inner city initiatives on Merseyside. Subject, therefore, to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the cash limit for class VIII, vote 4 will be increased by £930,000 from £69,490,000 to £70,420,000. The non-voted urban block cash limit will be reduced by the same amount ie by £930,000 from £377,645,000 to £376,715,000. There is therefore no net increase in public expenditure.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Egg Marketing Regulations (Farm Inspectors)

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance given to inspectors concerned with assessing farms under European Economic Community egg marketing regulations.

Mr. Gummer: I do not think it would be appropriate for such documents to be made generally available, but if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue a particular point I shall be happy to try to help him.

European Community (Israeli Access)

Mr. Marlow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is intended, following the entry of Spain and Portugal into the European Community, that Israel should have access to the Community for her agricultural products in any way different from that enjoyed by other Mediterranean non-European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Gummer: There are a series of agreements with Mediterranean third countries under which the Community allows tariff and other concessions on a wide range of products, including some in the agricultural sector. The differing concessions in these agreements are tailored to the traditional patterns of trade between the Community and each third country. All the agreements are currently being revised. For Israel as for other Mediterranean third countries the intention is to maintain the traditional pattern of trade after enlargement.

Agricultural Subsidies

Mr. Marlow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take action to reduce combined United Kingdom and European Economic Community agricultural subsidies payable in the United Kingdom to a level less than the value of the product.

Mr. Gummer: The support arrangements for all the major agricultural products are applied according to measures laid down in regulations agreed by the Council of Agriculture Ministers. This enables the countries of the European Community to make joint decisions on these important matters. We have consistently argued and continue to argue that in order to reduce the cost of this support and to control the growth of surplus production the Council should adopt a more restrictive price policy.

Intervention and Assisted Private Storage (Stocks)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a complete list of United Kingdom and European Community agricultural produce in public intervention and assisted private storage in England and the United Kingdom, respectively, the amount held and values at the latest available date.

Mr. Gummer: For details of the amount of foodstuffs held in UK public intervention and its values, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on Wednesday 23 October 1985 [col. *171*] to the question by the hon. Member for Knowsley North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk). I will provide the remaining information requested as soon as possible.

Liquid Skimmed Milk

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much liquid skimmed milk was subsidised for use as stockfeed in each of the last five years and 1985 to date in the United Kingdom; and what was the cost of the subsidies involved.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:—

Year	*Quantity (million litres)*	*Subsidy (£ million)*
1980	657·394	32·842
1981	628·466	29·775
1982	643·404	32·453
1983	1,066·577	64·684
1984	1,002·362	76·668
*1985	354·912	27·050

* To August

Commodity Regradation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which commodities, other than liquid skimmed milk, held in European Community intervention stores, have been rendered unfit for human consumption.

Mr. Gummer: Liquid skimmed milk is not held in intervention stores. Skimmed milk powder has been sold with the addition of other animal feed components which make it suitable only for animal feed. Breadmaking wheat has been denatured by the addition of a dye and sold for animal feed.

Icelandic Salted Cod

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has agreed to a tariff being reimposed on the import of Icelandic salted cod.

Mr. Gummer: The Council of Fisheries Ministers agreed in December 1984 to restore the full rate of duty

set out in the Common Custom Tariff on imports of dried and salted cod in the context of the expected acession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community. Existing trade patterns have been safeguarded by the Community opening a number of tariff free quotas for dried and salted cod following the restoration of the full rate of duty.

Farming Industry (Bad Weather Aid)

Mr. Home asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the value and the method of distribution of the aid which he has announced for sectors of the farming industry which have been affected by bad weather.

Mr. Jopling: I am considering the most appropriate ways of helping livestock farmers some of whom face enormous difficulties this winter because of the effect of the adverse weather on the availability of winter feed. We intend to provide help—extra money—where it is most needed as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 25 October 1985

WALES

Home-start Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many home-start schemes exist in Wales; and how many are receiving financial assistance through central Government funds;

(2) what is the level of central Government assistance to the Rhymney Valley home-start scheme; and what estimates exist for funding up to 1988, in cash and constant terms;

(3) what has been the annual level of funding, in constant terms, for the home-start consultancy in Wales since 1981; and what estimates are availabe up to 1988;

(4) what local or central Government funding is available to home-start schemes in Wales other than central funding of the home-start consultancy.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The home-start service is not extensive in Wales and there is no consultancy here. There are two projects under way in Aberconwy and Rhymney Valley which have received £2,000 and £11,900, respectively, under the opportunities for volunteering scheme. The latter project also received £2,500 from Mid-Glamorgan county council, and the council has recently submitted an application for urban programme assistance on behalf of Rhymney Valley home-start for funding in 1986-87.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia (Famine Relief)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of work undertaken by RAF Hercules on famine relief in Ethiopia; and for how long that work will continue.

Mr. Raison: Two RAF Hercules and their detachment, including a team from the Royal Corps of Transport, have been operating in Ethiopia since November 1984. Up to 22 October they had airlifted 15,934 tonnes of relief supplies and dropped a further 11,704 tonnes. The operation is much appreciated in Ethiopia. As I announced on 22 July at column 723, we have offered to keep the British detachment in Ethiopia until the latter part of December.

Songea-Makambako Road, Tanzania

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the original estimate of the cost of the Songea-Makambako road, Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: The original estimate of the cost of upgrading the Songea-Makambako road to all-weather standard was the equivalent of £41·8 million, of which Her Majesty's Government agreed in October 1978 to provide £39 million.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what tendering procedure was used for the second phase of the Songea-Makambako road, Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: Following satisfactory performance on the first phase of the project, the same contractor was offered a negotiated supplementary contract for work overlapping that in the first phase. The fender was examined both by the British consulting engineers supervising the project and by a firm of specialist estimators before the contract was awarded.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost so far of the two phases of the Songea-Makambako road, Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: Of the £84 million capital aid that ODA has approved for the Songea-Makambako road, £47·14 million was spent on phase I and £33·35 million has so far been spent on phase II. A further £5·6 million has been approved for associated technical co-operation, including consultancies. Most of this has been spent.

Mbeya Southern Highlands Hospital Project

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent on the Mbeya southern highlands health project in the last financial year.

Mr. Raison: In the financial year 1984-85, capital aid expenditure on the Mbeya southern regions health project was £699,000.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has so far been spent on the Mbeya southern highlands hospital project.

Mr. Raison: Capital aid expenditure on the Mbeya southern regions hospital project to date has been £5·17 million.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the original estimate of the cost of Mbeya southern highlands hospital project.

Mr. Raison: The original estimated cost to ODA of the Mbeya southern regions hospital project in Tanzania was £6·85 million; a further £500,000 was agreed earlier this year.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the progress to date of the outreach programme in the Mbeya southern highlands health project of Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: Through the outreach programme regular visits are mde by specialists from the referral hospital in Mbeya to 15 district hospitals and 25 health centres in the Mbeya, Rukwa and Iringa regions. These visits provide valuable training and health care on the spot.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Open University

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his recent visits to the Open University.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend visited the Open University on 17 and 20 July, when he discussed with the university its undergraduate work and continuing education programme. The purpose of the visits was to familiarise himself with the university, and he obtained a valuable picture of its activities and operations.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been (i) the total cost of the assisted places scheme, at 1984-85 prices, in each year for which figures are available, (ii) the numbers participating in the scheme, (iii) the average annual increase in fees in those schools participating in the scheme since its inception and (iv) the average increase in fees of independent schools not participating, over the same period.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is as follows:

	Financial year Expenditure £ million at 1984-85 prices	*School year Number of assisted pupils*	*School year Average fee increase percentage over preceding year*
1981-82	3·531	4,185	—
1982-83	9·489	8,616	10·9
1983-84	15·672	13,102	11·6
1984-85	22·152	17,386	6·8
1985-86	—	—	6·6

Information on the average fee increases at non-participating schools is not available.

University Degrees (Costs)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost of an Open University degree in comparison with the average cost of a conventional university degree in each of the last five years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Brooke: The information is not available. At the request of the Open University, discussions will be held at official level about comparative costs.

Students (Statistics)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the number of nursery class and nursery school places per 1,000 children aged three and four years in each London education authority, in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan authorities and in Greater London, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985, the numbers of pupils in nursery schools and classes per 1,000 of the three and four-year-old population were as follows:

	Numbers
Barking	330
Barnet	310
Bexley	110
Brent	330
Bromley	20
Croydon	80
Ealing	340
Enfield	220
Haringey	440
Harrow	160
Havering	40
Hillingdon	430
Hounslow	660
Kingston-upon-Thames	300
Merton	410
Newham	600
Redbridge	80
Richmond-upon-Thames	150
Sutton	160
Waltham Forest	400
Inner London	370
Birmingham	290
Coventry	230
Dudley	280
Sandwell	390
Solihull	270
Walsall	550
Wolverhampton	560
Knowsley	320
Liverpool	450
St. Helens	230
Sefton	290
Wirral	170
Bolton	330
Bury	180
Manchester	520
Oldham	280
Rochdale	270
Salford	510
Stockport	130
Tameside	380
Trafford	120
Wigan	250
Barnsley	490
Doncaster	380
Rotherham	390
Sheffield	390
Bradford	290
Calderdale	270
Kirklees	390
Leeds	300
Wakefield	440
Gateshead	320
Newcastle upon Tyne	390
North Tyneside	490
South Tyneside	480
Sunderland	350
Avon	150
Bedfordshire	280
Berkshire	240
Buckinghamshire	110
Cambridgeshire	120
Cheshire	210
Cleveland	480
Cornwall	140
Cumbria	200
Derbyshire	220
Devon	80
Dorset	60
Durham	370
East Sussex	80
Essex	50
Gloucestershire	—

	Numbers
Hampshire	50
Hereford and Worcester	60
Hertfordshire	320
Humberside	300
Isle of Wight	60
Kent	50
Lancashire	160
Leicestershire	220
Lincolnshire	80
Norfolk	50
North Yorkshire	170
Northamptonshire	150
Northumberland	210
Nottinghamshire	420
Oxfordshire	120
Shropshire	110
Somerset	10
Staffordshire	220
Suffolk	110
Surrey	120
Warwickshire	160
West Sussex	30
Wiltshire	10
England	220

Note: The figures are rounded to the nearest 10

School Admissions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of the provisions of the Education Act 1980 dealing with school admissions;

(2) for each local authority, how many admission appeals have been made to education appeals committees for the *(a)* voluntary and *(b)* state sectors under the provisions of the Education Act 1980; how many applicants have been successful in their appeals; and how many cases have subsequently been referred to the Commission for Local Administration on grounds of maladministration by the local education authority involved, in each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is satisfied with the implementation of the school admission provisions of the Education Act 1980. The information requested regarding admission appeals is not available centrally.

REPLAN Scheme

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make a decision on the future of the REPLAN scheme.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision by the end of the year.

Burnham Committee

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what changes in membership have been reported to his Department by the teachers' unions represented on the Burnham committee since 31 December; and what is the latest total membership of each union provided to him.

Sir Keith Joseph: Teacher unions were asked for and provided numbers of fully paid-up members as at 31 December 1984 who were statutorily entitled to salaries determined by the Burnham primary and secondary committee and paid accordingly by avant LEA in England and Wales — that is "Burnham-relevant" figures — as follows:

	Numbers
Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association (AMMA)	64,636
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NAS UWT)	115,611
National Union of Teachers (NUT)	216,138
Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)	21,260
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)	19,952
Secondary Heads' Association (SHA)	3,939

Two associations have provided later figures. AMMA has indicated that its Burnham-relevant membership had increased to 73,654 by July 1985. PAT has not provided a later Burnham-relevant figure but has said that total membership increased from 27,902 on 31 December 1984 to 35,832 in October.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa (Trade Delegations)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister whether the agreement reached at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to cease to make public funds available to trade delegations to South Africa includes delegations already planned.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The agreement is not specific on this point.

We shall interpret the provisions regarding Government funding for trade missions to South Africa with due regard for the circumstances of individual cases.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for each class of local authority and for local authorities in total, the percentage of increase in current expenditure in cash between *(a)* 1978-79 and 1985-86 and *(b)* 1981-82 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information for English local authorities is as follows:

Percentage increase in net current expenditure in cash terms

Class of authority	*(a) 1978-79 to 1985-86*	*(b) 1981-82 to 1985-86*
Shire counties	97	27
Shire districts	86	30
Metropolitan counties	126	26
Metropolitan districts	91	24
Inner London boroughs	118	37
Outer London boroughs	89	23
GLC	119	35
ILEA	119	35
City of London	294	97
Isles of Scilly	101	34
Total all England	98	27

Local Authority Associations (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the ground rules circulated within his Department to ensure

adequate consultation with the local authority associations in the light of the judgment in R *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Dog Wardens

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in the last three years have ceased to employ dog wardens.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department does not have this information.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities currently have dog wardens.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected by my Department, but I understand that the joint advisory committee on pets in society is aware of some 190 local authorities in Great Britain which currently operate dog warden services.

Council House Sales

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to provide for higher discounts to be given to tenants or third parties purchasing the freehold or long leaseholds of individual properties in hard-to-let urban estates; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Many of the properties in the estates to which my hon. Friend refers are flats. We are considering what further encouragement can be given to tenants of flats to buy their homes. We have also recently announced proposals for legislation to give purchasers of flats under the right to buy better protection against high service charges.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment upon which matters relating to the London residuary body he is prepared to answer questions.

Mrs. Rumbold: Matters over which the Local Government Act 1985 gives my right hon. Friend specific control.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the minutes of meetings of the London residuary body will be made available to hon. Members.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is a matter for the London residuary body.

Spray Irrigation Licences

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many spray irrigation licences have been issued in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years; and if he will undertake to review the duration of such licences.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is not held centrally since licences are granted by water authorities. I am unaware of any problem arising from their duration.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has received for joint agreements on waste disposal in the metropolitan counties and Greater London after abolition; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Rumbold: In four of the six metropolitan counties — Tyne and Wear, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and West Midlands—we have received joint proposals from all the district councils. If these can be put into effect by means of binding agreements between the districts it appears that they will make satisfactory joint arrangements for the discharge of waste disposal functions. In London, proposals put forward by Bromley, Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton and Sutton (London boroughs ""Group 1") and by the Cities of London and Westminster (Group 6") for the operational aspects of waste disposal, if carried into effect, would also appear to make satisfactory joint arrangements for these purposes. Also in London, the London boroughs of Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, and Richmond upon Thames ("Group 3") have invited the Secretary of State to exercise his powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985 in due course to set up a single authority for the operational aspects of waste disposal to cover their areas and adjoining boroughs in west London.

In Greater London, we have received no agreed proposals for joint arrangements for the regulations of hazardous waste, where we have indicated that we see advantages in such arrangements. However, a number of London boroughs have put forward proposals, or have indicated that they would welcome the Secretary of State using his powers under section 10 to set up a single authority for this purpose. Nor have we received proposals in respect of the operational aspects in the London boroughs—other than those I have already mentioned—adequate to rule out the need to fulfil the duty to set up single authorities laid upon the Secretary of State by section 10.

None of the various proposals received from district councils in Greater Manchester or Merseyside appears in current circumstances to represent satisfactory arrangements for either the regulatory or the operational aspects of waste disposal. Four district councils, Wigan and Bolton in Greater Manchester and Wirral and Sefton in Merseyside, proposed that they should be allowed to operate independently for at least the operational aspects of waste disposal. There is such a community of interest between each of these four authorities and their neighbouring districts that there would appear to be clear advantage in joint arrangements. If proposals which include these authorities are not made by 15 November, it therefore seems likely that the Secretary of State would have to use his powers under section 10 to set up single authorities. However, the establishment of such authorities in Greater Manchester and Merseyside would not preclude other arrangements being substituted at some future date if the situation were to change.

Those councils whose proposed arrangements appear satisfactory have now been invited to prepare formal documentation for these arrangements. A further announcement will be made after 15 November on the proposed use of the powers under section 10 to set up

single authorities for areas where joint arrangements would be advantageous, but no such satisfactory arrangements have been made by the due date.

English Estates

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* (*a*) the amount of industrial floor space owned or managed by English Estates on a region-by-region basis, indicating which region/regions enjoys special development area status and (*b*) the amount of industrial floor space currently unlet within the ownership of English Estates on a region-by-region basis.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply.

The table gives the position at the end of March 1985. A revised table showing the position at the end of September is being prepared and I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Industrial floorspace owned or managed by English Estates at 31 March 1985 (by Standard Region)

Region	Total stock units	Sq. metres	Total vacant units	Sq. metres
NE	1,542	1,166,763	419	214,329
NW	1,070	556,527	331	146,224
Y & H	626	164,408	231	42,926
EM	204	48,080	38	8,939
WM	176	38,416	33	6,464
SW	528	121,248	155	36,029
SE	146	21,390	30	3,395

Under current assisted area designations, introduced in November 1984, all regions now contain both development and intermediate areas as well as non-assisted areas, except that the south-east is entirely non-assisted and the west midlands contains only intermediate and non-assisted areas.

ENERGY

Wiltshire (Oil Exploration)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of exploration for oil in Wiltshire.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: One exploration well has been drilled in Wiltshire in each of the years 1936, 1972, 1975, 1976 and 1980, and two in 1985. No commercial discoveries have been made.

Electricity Boards (Meter Reading)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to remove the right of electricity boards to enter consumers' homes for the purpose of reading their meters without their prior consent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. Electricity boards must have the right to inspect meters at reasonable intervals to ensure that estimated readings are in line with actual consumption and that the equipment is in good condition. Boards exercise their right of entry for this purpose as infrequently as possible. In all cases of entry, boards are required to apply for a warrant of entry from a justice of the peace who needs to be satisfied that the application is justified.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Prisoners (Repatriation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number and nationality of foreign prisoners who have been repatriated since the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984 was implemented;

(2) how many foreign prisoners are currently in staging establishments awaiting repatriation.

Mr. Mellor: Applications for repatriation have been received from 19 prisoners in England and Wales. These will be transmitted to the other Governments concerned for consideration, in accordance with the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons. One of the prisoners concerned is located in Wandsworth prison, which is a "staging establishment" for the purpose of repatriation, but in no case have the transfer arrangements yet been set in train.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of foreign prisoners, by nationality, who are eligible for repatriation under the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984 currently in prison.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information relates to prisoners held in prison department establishments on 30 June. Prisoners are eligible for repatriation if they are nationals of one of the countries which has ratified the Council of Europe convention of the transfer of sentenced persons, and have at least six months of their sentences excluding remission still to serve on the date the convention came into force between the United Kingdom and their country. From central records, which are approximate, it is estimated that on 30 June 1985 the numbers of eligible prisoners were: Sweden 1, France 11, USA 33, Spain 16, Canada 16.

Prison Work

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the underlying reasons why prison workshops have been under-utilised, and whether these reasons are being considered by the prison industries review teams.

Mr. Mellor: The reasons for under-utilisation of prison workshops are many and often interrelated. Among the main causes are changes in the population and regime at some establishments, including local prisons and youth custody centres, together with competing pressures on the staff resources available. In addition, a number of workshops in the engineering, plastic, woodwork and concrete industries are competing for a supply of work which is inadequate to justify the level of manufacturing capacity in these industries. The prison industries review teams are taking detailed account of these aspects.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what acceptable alternatives to useful employment in prison are being considered and what are the likely manpower and cost implications.

Mr. Mellor: The review of prison industries announced on 12 July 1985 is charged with examining how the present network of industrial workshops could be rationalised, while retaining the existing level of work and

related activity for inmates. A primary aim is to increase the utilisation of remaining workshops. Alternatives to industrial work will vary from establishment to establishment, but include such activities as construction industry and vocational training and education, including physical education. The main objective of the review is to deploy the present considerable resources to better effect, but until the review is completed it is not possible to assess the likely manpower and cost implications. My right hon. Friend will announce the outcome of the review in due course.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prison workshops at each London prison now closed due to a lack of workshop instructors.

Mr. Mellor: No precise figures can be given. Prison workshops may be closed for a day or part of a day because of the redeployment of uniformed staff, including instructors, to other duties, often arising from court commitments. These vary from day to day.

Prison Rule 43

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons in the United Kingdom take only prisoners on rule 43.

Mr. Mellor: There is no establishment which accommodates only prisoners subject to rule 43 of the prison rules for England and Wales.

Prisons (Property Purchases)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of properties purchased by his Department in each of the last five years for use by prison officers working in each of the London prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Ten properties were purchased in 1980-81. No properties have been purchased in subsequent years.

Prison Officers (Removal Expenses)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the financial allowances paid to prison officers towards removal expenses when being transferred to another prisom.

Mr. Mellor: A prison officer who is compulsorily transferred from one prison to another beyond daily travelling distance is entiteld to claim reimbursement of all costs necessarily incurred in moving his home.

Gareth Wheelon

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why 15-year-old Gareth Wheelon of Castle Bromwich, who was sentenced to six months youth custody by the Solihull court on 6 August, was detained initially for eight days in Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green.

Mr. Mellor: Under the terms of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 a juvenile sentenced to youth custody may be detained for a temporary purpose in a prison. This includes allocation, which was the purpose in this case.

Metropolitan Police (BBC Broadcasts)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many times, in the last six years, the Metropolitan police have asked the British Broadcasting Corporation to withdraw or amend a broadcast.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the Metropolitan police provide frequent advice and assistance to broadcasters on matters with which the force is concerned. A specific request to withdraw or amend a programme would be made only if the Metropolitan police had reason to believe that the programme would be prejudicial to the course of justice or to police operations, or was factually inaccurate. No central record is kept of such requests. Final decisions on programme content are a matter for the broadcasting authorities alone.

Leonie Price (Murder)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the arrangements for liaison between the various police forces engaged in the investigations into the murder of Leonie Price.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. Full liaison exists between Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex police with additional assistance from other forces to computerise the investigation incident room. Detective Chief Superintendent Shields of Suffolk constabulary, who is in overall command of the inquiry, has received training in the handling of investigations of this kind, developed following the Byford review of the Yorkshire ripper investigation.

Italian Terrorists (Deportation)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 25 July, *Official Report*, column *663*, he now intends to take any action to deport Roberte Fiore and four other Italians who have been convicted of terrorist offences in Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing at present to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary at column *663* on 25 July, but I am keeping these cases under review.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of arrivals in the United Kingdom from (a) Bangladesh, (b) India, (c) Pakistan and (d) Sri Lanka detained by the immigration authorities in each week during the past three months.

Mr. David Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police (CS Gas and Plastic Bullets)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many and which occasions in the last 12 months CS gas and plastic bullets have been drawn for use by the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *44*]: I regret that my earlier reply was inaccurate in stating that authority for the operational use of CS gas for public order purposes had never yet been given in the Metropolitan police district. In fact, as my reply to the immediately following question made clear, the commissioner gave authority for both CS and baton rounds to be used in Tottenham on 6 October.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Safety Fencing)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the types of safety fencing currently used on motorways, particularly on central reservations; and if he has any plans to improve them.

Mrs. Chalker: I am generally satisfied with the types of safety fences used on motorways, including central reservations, and have no immediate plans to change them. As with many aspects of roads and road safety, the Department has a programme of research and development on safety fences that may lead to changes in the future.

EC (Driving Licence)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implementation of the European Communities' directive of 4 December 1980 on the introduction of a Community driving licence (80/1263/EEC).

Mr. Michael Spicer: In compliance with the requirements of directive 80/1263/EEC, since 1 January 1983 we have been issuing equivalent exchange licences to EC licence holders becoming resident here. Britain already complied at that date with the directive's requirements on minimum driving test and medical standards.

The directive also requires member states to issue their national driving licences in a Community model format from the start of next year. Accordingly, Community-style British licences are being issued to run from 1 January 1986. But they are only to be issued to those applying for a new full licence or those whose existing licences need to be replaced. Existing green licences will continue to be valid both here and in other countrieds which recognise British licences.

The new licences are pink and carry on the front the internationally recognised "GB" symbol. Beneath the symbol the words "driving licence" appear in the various Community languages and also the words "EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES Model".

The driver and vehicle licensing centre at Swansea will continue to be responsible for issuing licences. Driving licence vehicle groups remain unchanged and provisional (learner) licences will still be green. Supplementary licences will still be needed to drive heavy goods and public service vehicles.

Apart from these specific requirements, the directive looks towards the further harmonisation of driver licensing within the European Community, and the United Kingdom is currently involved in discussions in Brussels on this subject.

Roads

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport by how much capital expenditure on roads exceeded or fell short of planned levels in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures are as follows:

	£ million		Variation	
	plan	*outturn*	*£ million*	*per cent.*
Trunk Roads Capital Expenditure				
1980-81	487	473	−14	3
1981-82	651	559	−92	14
1982-83	684	678	−6	1
1983-84	656	644	−12	2
1984-85	728	722	−6	1
Local Roads Capital Expenditure				
1980-81	330	370	+40	12
1981-82	355	326	−29	8
1982-83	418	409	−9	2
1983-84	478	457	−21	4
1984-85*	491	460	−31	6

* provisional

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport by how much current expenditure on roads exceeded or fell short of planned levels in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures are as follows:

	£ million		Variation	
	Plan	*Outturn*	*£ million*	*per cent.*
Trunk Roads Current Expenditure				
1980-81	51	52	+1	2
1981-82	37	70	+33	89
1982-83	62	61	−1	2
1983-84	73	65	−8	11
1984-85	78	84	+6	8
Local Roads Current Expenditure				
1980-81	708	667	−41	6
1981-82	710	793	+83	12
1982-83	799	844	+45	6
1983-84	844	877	+33	4
1984-85*	902	949	+47	5

* provisional

Vehicle Registration

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a statement over the future of the vehicle registration number prefix system.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We are currently carrying out a review of the impact of the August change in the year identification letter on the driver and vehicle licensing centre's system. If the review indicates that an alternative would enable us to make savings and improvements, we shall then consult all the main interests concerned.

Tachographs

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many visits have been made by representatives of the traffic commissioners or his Department to local long distance coach operators to check bus tachographs; and what action has been subsequently taken.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Airports (Duty-free Sales)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a study of the safety implications of providing duty-free sales at airports of arrival rather than airports of departure.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation safety matters are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. My chief inspector of accidents has advised there is no evidence that the carriage of alcohol in aircraft passenger cabins has jeopardised survival in any survivable aircraft accident. However, this aspect will be considered in the investigation into the Manchester tragedy.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if any assessment has been made of the effect on the revenue of the British Airports Authority of providing duty-free sales at airports of arrival rather than departure;

(2) if any assessment has been made of the effect on the income of the British Airports Authority of offering duty-free goods in both departure and arrival lounges.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The restrictions of duty-free sales to departing passengers reflects an international Customs convention. The effect on the British Airports Authority's income of offering duty-free goods to arriving passengers would depend on the extent to which other international airports made such a change.

Road Accidents (Public Inquiries)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to introduce a system of public inquiries when public service vehicles are involved in serious accidents similar to that which occured on the M6 on Monday 21 October.

Mrs. Chalker: Serious road accidents — including those involving public service vehicles — are already subject to thorough investigation by the police and, as necessary, by vehicle examiners from my Department. I am satisfied that present procedures are sufficient to establish the factors involved and any lessons which can be learnt.

Taxis and Hire Cars

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek powers to regulate drivers' hours of work in respect of taxis and hire cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no such plans, as there is no evidence of safety problems caused by taxi or hire car drivers' hours of work. Although many taxi drivers work quite long hours, their working day, unlike that of a bus driver, is generally interspersed with long periods of rest.

Clause 12 of the Transport Bill allows licensed taxi operators to obtain PSV operators' licences and to register local services under the new system the Bill is to introduce. In such cases, taxi drivers would be subject to public service vehicle drivers' hours rules. But for normal taxi or hire car services, or for the shared use of taxis or hire cars under clause 10 or 11 of the Transport Bill, we see no need for such control.

Motor Cycles (Noise)

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to seek to limit noisy motor cycles.

Mr. Ridley: We are pressing in the Community for stricter standards of permitted noise from new motor cycles. Regulations introduced last year require replacement silencers for motor cycles first registered from the start of this year to be marked to show compliance with a British standard. This will apply progressively to an increasing number of motor cycles in use, and should help enforcement against noisy motor cycles.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon Fisheries

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made into his study into the economic evaluation of salmon fisheries in England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer: Work has commenced on the study referred to in my predecessor's reply to my hon. Friend of 20 July 1984, which has been commissioned from Exeter university. It will consider evidence from the whole of Great Britain, and a report is expected in about two years.

Lead Core Lines

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is his intention that the draft model water authority byelaws, to be made under section 28 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, should apply to lead core lines.

Mr. Gummer: It is our intention to include within the scope of the draft model byelaw all forms of lead weights used in fishing for salmon, trout, freshwater fish or eels which could cause harm to swans if ingested by them. We are examining the question of lead core lines raised by my hon. Friend, and I will reply to his recent letter as soon as we have completed our examination.

DEFENCE

Territorial Army

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those Territorial Army exercises in which members of the United States National Guard have been involved.

Mr. Stanley: Members of the United States National Guard exercise regularly with the Territorial Army as part of the routine exchange training programme.

In 1984 United States National Guardsmen were attached to Territorial Army units who participated in exercise Lionheart.

This year some National Guardsmen took up attachments with individual Territorial Army units for their annual camp.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of Defence if he will list those Territorial Army exercises in which members of the Bermuda armed forces have been engaged.

Mr. Stanley: None, so far as our records show.

Ministry Houses

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter of 30 August from the right hon. Member for Brent, East and the reply of 30 September from the Minister of State for Defence concerning empty Ministry of Defence houses.

Mr. Stanley: I have placed copies of the correspondence in the Library.

Salvadorean Officers (Training)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of Defence what training facilities are being provided for Salvadorean army officers at Sandhurst.

Mr. Stanley: There are no members of the Salvadorean armed forces currently under training in the United Kingdom.

HMS Redpole

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the defects apparent in HMS Redpole after its refit in Lowestoft; how many weeks the refit took; and what is the cost of the refit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: HMS Redpole was converted from RAF to RN use at Lowestoft. The conversion took 31 weeks, including sea trials. The cost of this work is commercially confidential. Following sea trials it was decided that the propellors—which had not formed part of the conversion package — should be replaced at Rosyth dockyard. In addition, some 29 defects were reported, some of them very minor. It would not be appropriate to disclose details of defects in an operational ship. The responsibility for rectifying these defects is a matter for negotiation.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will explain why royal dockyard employees were not given full information on the reasons why they were required to do extra work on HMS Redpole.

Mr. Norman Lamont: During sea trials of HMS Redpole, following conversion at a commercial yard, a problem with its propellers—which had not formed part of the contractor's work package—came to light. It was decided that this should be rectified at Rosyth dockyard and dockyard employees were informed through a standing dockyard committee of the work that they would be required to undertake. Although there is work to be done on other operational defects, this will be carried out by the Royal Naval Fleet maintenance group at Rosyth and will not involve the dockyard.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the cost of additional work on HMS Redpole at Rosyth naval dockyard; and to whom it will be charged.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Rosyth dockyard is carrying out work on the propellers of HMS Redpole. This work was not part of the contract specification in the ship's recent conversion and the costs will fall to my Department in the usual way.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis private contractors are visiting the royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In his statement on 23 July, at columns 867-68, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that he intended to seek competitive tenders from competent British companies to manage the royal dockyards. Representatives of most of the companies which have expressed interest in tendering have now visited one or both of the royal dockyards and have received detailed briefings on their operations; further such visits will be arranged.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence under what authority, prior to the passage of any legislation, he is incurring expenditure in the valuation of dockyard assets, the preparation of prospectuses for private companies, and visits by private companies to the dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Provision to cover necessary expenditure involved in consideration of changes to the future operation of the royal dockyards was included in the defence Supply Estimates.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will deposit in the Library part two of the prospectus for private contractors interested in winning a possible franchise for the management of Rosyth and Plymouth dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Touche Ross, a firm of management consultants, was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence to produce descriptive reports on each of the royal dockyards to assist companies in forming a commercial judgment on whether to bid for the future management of the dockyards. Phase I of the Touche Ross report, which gives a preliminary view of the facilities and operations in the dockyards, has recently been completed; copies have been made available to all companies concerned and to the trades unions, and I am placing a copy in the Library of the House. Phase II of the report has not yet been completed. It is, however, the intention that it should provide a more comprehensive description of the facilities and it will, therefore, be classified. Copies will, of course, be made available to the Select Committee on Defence.

Airspace Violations

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Soviet penetrations of United Kingdom airspace there were in 1984; and how many so far in 1985.

Mr. Stanley: There have been no penetrations of United Kingdom territorial airspace by Soviet military aircraft in 1984 and 1985. If my hon. Friend is concerned with the United Kingdom air defence region, which principally comprises international airspace out to a considerable distance from the United Kingdom mainland, the detailed figures on penetrations are classified. In general terms they average approximately three to four a week, but rise significantly during periods of major Soviet exercise activity.

Reserve Army

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will consider plans for further expanding the role of the Reserve Army in such a way that regular strength can be replaced.

Mr. Stanley: I presume my hon. Friend is referring to Regular Reserves, that is, those individuals who, having left the Regular Forces, retain a Reserve commitment. Their numbers are not therefore subject to direct Ministry of Defence control. However, we are anxious to achieve the most effective use of these personnel and have therefore recently introduced various measures to that end.

HMS Conqueror (Log Book)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the police inquiry into the disappearance of the control room log of HMS Conqueror revealed the commission of any disciplinary offences by any member of the crew; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Police reports submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions are confidential to him and are not disclosed to other Government Departments. However, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 30 November 1984, at columns 593-94, the board of inquiry convened by the Commander-in-Chief Fleet on 25 October showed that the proper procedures for the custody and disposal of confidential control room logs had not been followed in HMS Conqueror for many months, including the period from April to September (inclusive) covered by the missing logs. Disciplinary action against those responsible for breaches of the regulations will now be considered.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any part of the control room log of HMS Conqueror is still missing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Neither the Metropolitan police nor naval inquiries were able to locate the missing documents. The control room logs for HMS Conqueror for the period April to September 1982 are still missing.

Marchwood Military Port

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any discussions have taken place with civilian ports authorities to consider the option of contracting for existing civilian berth spaces rather than deepening the facilities at Marchwood military port.

Mr. Stanley: Other United Kingdom ports, both naval and civil, have been considered over the years as possible substitutes for Marchwood; but all have fallen unacceptably short of our requirements in one or more ways.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any contract has been placed to deepen and improve facilities at the Marchwood military port near Southampton.

Mr. Stanley: Tenders have been invited in respect of certain work, including dredging the waterfront, but no contract has yet been let.

Personnel (Benefits)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces are at present in receipt of *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* free school meals for their children.

Mr. Stanley: The service rent and rates rebate scheme, which is analogous to local authority housing benefit, is available to eligible personnel living in service married quarters or official hirings. Currently some 1,450 personnel are claiming rebates under this scheme. The Ministry of Defence holds no information on personnel accommodated other than in married quarters or official hirings and claiming housing benefit through their local authority scheme.

Information on the provision of free meals to children attending service schools is not held centrally, but the number is not thought to be great. The Ministry of Defence holds no information on the provision of free meals to those children of personnel who attend local education authority or other non-service schools and who represent the great majority.

Service Men (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of non-commissioned rank in each of the armed services over the past three years who, on completing 12 years' service, have left the service; how many applied to do a further 10 years; and how many were refused re-engagement.

Mr. Stanley: The information requested is set out in the following table:

		1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
	Royal Navy†			
a.	Number eligible to terminate service at 12 year point	156	163	240
b.	Number who left Service	16	24	30
c.	Number who applied to complete 22 years	*n/a	*n/a	*n/a
d.	Numbers refused re-engagement	*n/a	*n/a	*n/a
e.	Number re-engaged	140	139	210
	Army‡			
a.	Number eligible to terminate service at 12 year point	3,921	4,810	4,591
b.	Number who left Service	542	875	823
c.	Number who applied to complete 22 years	3,471	4,187	4,007
d.	Number refused re-engagement	92	252	239
e.	Number re-engaged	3,379	3,935	3,768
	Royal Air Force			
a.	Number eligible to terminate service at 12 year point	2,110	1,813	1,379
b.	Number who left the Service	870	680	593
c.	Number who applied to complete 22 years	1,559	1,425	1,067
d.	Number refused re-engagement	319	292	281
e.	Number re-engaged	1,240	1,133	786

* No information is centrally available on numbers of applications and refusals for the Royal Navy

† No 12 year engagement exists in the Royal Marines.

‡ No formal 12 year engagement exists in the Army.

Servicemen enlisted since May 1972 do not have to apply to continue their service to the 22 year point.

Those enlisted prior to May 1972 who did not change to the new terms may exit at the 12 year point but otherwise are committed to a further 3 years service.

However, the Army may terminate a man's service under QR 9.413 at the 12 year point.

The details cover artificers (excluding old style "mechanicians"), communications technicians and medical technicians at Servicemen on 12 year engagements only.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much capital investment has been made in the Devonport royal naval dockyard over the last 10 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Capital investment, in terms of plant and machinery and buildings, has been about £119 million at Devonport royal naval dockyard over the last 10 years.

Rosyth Dockyard

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much capital investment has been made in the Rosyth royal naval dockyard over the last 10 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Capital investment, in terms of plant and machinery and buildings, has been about £44 million at Rosyth royal naval dockyard over the last 10 years.

HMS Otter and Euryalus

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what parts of the refit programme for HMS Otter and HMS Euryalus which were originally to be carried out by the contractor have been subsequently carried out by naval personnel.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No part of the refit of HMS Otter, originally to be carried out by the contractor, has subsequently been carried out by naval personnel. Only two small items of the refit programme for HMS Euryalus forming part of the original contract—repacking a valve and cleaning a gauge glass—have been carried out by naval personnel. Appropriate adjustments will be made for payments for this work.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the original cost of the refit contract to HMS Euryalus;

(2) what was the original cost of the refit contract to HMS Otter;

(3) what is the latest estimated cost of the refit contracts for HMS Otter and HMS Euryalus.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the original dates for the completion of the refit contracts for HMS Otter and HMS Euryalus; and what are now the expected completion dates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: HMS Euryalus is shortly to complete her refit, which will have taken 48 weeks. This is seven weeks more than the original planned time, but includes four weeks addition for further work added after planning. Work on HMS Otter started in December 1984 with a planned duration of about two years. This remains the case.

PAYMASTER GENERAL

Youth Training

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many representations he has received concerning the combining of mode A and B youth training schemes.

Mr. Trippier: By the end of September 1985 over 500 replies had been received to the paper "Development of the Youth Training Scheme — Some Issues for Consideration," which was issued by the Manpower Services Commission in April. The responses showed overwhelming support for the unification of funding and administration in the new two-year scheme.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many people entered youth training schemes in each of the local authority districts in Hampshire; and how many completed the scheme in both modes A and B for the last two years.

Mr. Trippier: The table gives details by mode of young people entering and completing the youth training scheme in each local authority district of Hampshire during 1983-84 and 1984-85. The figures for completions in 1984-85 include a number of young people who started training in 1983-84 and finished their course in 1984-85. Similarly, many young people entering schemes in 1984-85 will not complete their training programme until 1985-86.

Local authority district	*1983-84*				*1984-85*			
	*Entrants**		*Completions†*		*Entrants**		*Completions†*	
	Mode A	*Mode B*	*Mode A*	*Mode B*	*Mode A*	*Mode B*	*Mode A*	*Mode B*
Basingstoke	757	278	—	42	682	168	341	47
East Hampshire	207	42	—	8	247	38	104	11
Eastleigh	286	52	1	7	363	28	179	15
Fareham	405	131	—	27	528	90	219	27
Gosport	278	62	—	—	265	53	145	36
Hart	510	122	—	—	521	—	183	56
Havant	486	94	—	16	519	86	254	30
New Forest	354	123	4	22	323	96	173	34
Portsmouth	1,111	645	9	153	1,275	422	531	170
Rushmoor	21	130	—	26	15	72	9	23
Southampton	1,422	397	4	43	1,750	279	592	92
Test Valley	288	36	—	6	298	9	145	13
Winchester	419	204	1	28	347	121	217	38
Hampshire Total	6,546	2,316	19	378	7,133	1,462	3,092	592

* The entrants figures include a number of young people who have joined more than one youth training scheme.

† The figures quoted for completions exclude young peole who left schemes before completing their full entitlement to training.

Small Firms (Loans)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General (1) what was the number of small firm loans applied for and granted in *(a)* Hampshire and *(b)* Portsmouth for each year from 1979 to the present;

(2) what was the number of small firm loans applied for and granted in England and Wales, respectively, for each year from 1979 to the present.

Mr. Trippier: The loan guarantee scheme for small firms was introduced in 1981. I have listed the number of guarantees applied for and granted under the scheme from 1981 to the present.

Hampshire and Portsmouth are included in the south-east region for statistical purposes. A further geographical breakdown is not available.

Year	*England*	*Wales*	*South East*
1981	1,594	97	690
1982	5,323	359	2,279
1983	4,755	195	2,048
1984	2,315	81	1,085
1985	519	24	242

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what was the percentage of married women in work *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time in each year since 1970.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is available from the census of population and labour force surveys and is therefore restricted to the years shown in the following table:

Percentage of all married women in work

Great Britain

	*(a) Working full-time**	*(b) Working part-time**
April 1971†	19·7	19·1
April 1981‡	22·0	23·0
Spring 1983§	21·1	23·5
Spring 1984§	21·1	25·8

* Except where indicated, persons in employment are shown as working full-time or part-time according to whether they described their job as a full-time or part-time job.

† *Source:* 1971 Census of Population. Persons in employment are classified as full-time if they usually worked more than 30 hours per week, excluding overtime and meal breaks, and as part-time if they usually worked not more than 30 hours per week.

‡ *Source:* 1981 Census of Population.

§ *Source:* Labour Force Surveys.

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Merseyside.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As we all know, the level of unemployment in Merseyside is much too high. That is why there is an extensive range of Government assistance to attract new investment and new jobs. The area will also benefit from the current expansion of our special employment and training measures. But the creation of jobs in Merseyside will depend primarily on the overall attractiveness of the area to potential investors and the competitiveness of local industry.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is, in money terms and as a percentage of the Northern Ireland Office's budget, the amount of support given to Harland and Wolff for each year since 1979.

Dr. Boyson: The following table sets out the payments made to Harland and Wolff plc under the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 each year since 1979-80 and the percentage which that assistance represents of the total Northern Ireland public expenditure programme for those years:

	£ million	*Percentage*
1979-80	22·5	0·9
1980-81	41·2	1·4
1981-82	40·1	1·3
1982-83	46·2	1·3
1983-84	40·0	1·1
1984-85	37·5	*0·9

* Estimate.

Security Forces (Co-operation)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether, in the light of the recent statement of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, that the Gardai in the Republic of Ireland had to reduce their resources for the penetration and monitoring of terrorist groups, he remains satisfied with the co-operation between the security forces of the Irish Republic and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the apprehension and conviction of members of the Irish Republican Army and the Irish National Liberation Army; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the recent statement by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on security accurately represents *(a)* Her Majesty's Government's policy towards cross-border co-operation between the British and Irish security forces and *(b)* Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the effectiveness of that co-operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searches)

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, in view of the removal, in the near future, of all the high security women prisoners in Armagh prison to Maghaberry prison, he will make it his policy to discontinue strip searching in Armagh prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No. The search procedures used at Armagh are similar to those used in comparable prisons throughout the United Kingdom and, to the best of our knowledge, in most western European countries and in north America.

Women Prisoners

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland where women prisoners on remand and short sentence women prisoners will be held following the closing down of Armagh prison.

Mr. Scott: When Armagh prison closes, all women prisoners in Northern Ireland will be held in the new women's prison at Maghaberry.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Dentists

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of dentists holding National Health Service contracts in each region in England.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of general dental practitioners in contract with family practitioner committees in each region in England on 30 September 1984—the latest date for which figures are available—are set out in the following table:

Regional Health Authority	*No. of GDPs*
Northern	705
Yorkshire	954
Trent	1,054
East Anglian	518
North West Thames	1,507
North East Thames	1,199
South East Thames	1,231
South West Thames	1,191
Wessex	843
Oxford	747
South Western	1,112
West Midlands	1,270
Mersey	657
North Western	1,078

Note

A dentist practising in more than one FPC area has been included in the area in which the major part of his or her work (in the quarter ended 30 September 1984) was carried out.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many full and part-time dentists have been in practice in each year since 1955; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many courses of treatment where full dentures were needed were given to patients over the age of 65 years in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available;

(2) how many patients over the age of 65 years received National Health Service dental treatment in the last year to a convenient date.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of courses of treatment provided to patients aged 65 and over in England in 1984 was 1,782,510. Of these, the number of treatments involving the provision of full or partial dentures was 341,640; the number of courses involving provision of full dentures is not known. Information on the number of patients involved in these courses of treatment is not available.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage of treatment costs borne by the average patient in the general dental service since April, excluding examinations and other exempt items of treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not yet available.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients received dental treatment in each year since 1955; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Gas and Electricity (Disconnections)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that his Department extends to all cases its current practice of informing local authority social services departments about gas or electricity disconnections only where young children are involved.

Mr. Major: Where a fuel board has notified the DHSS local office of its intention to disconnect a supplementary benefit claimant's fuel supply, and this cannot be avoided by paying part of the claimant's supplementary benefit direct to the fuel board, staff are instructed to inform the local authority social services department. This applies to all such cases and not just those involving young children.

Toxocara Canis

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of toxocara canis have been recorded in the last three years.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mammography Tests

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to provide through the National Health Service regular X-ray mammography tests for all women over 35 years.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Health announced on 2 July that the Government were establishing an expert working group to consider the information now available on breast cancer screening by mammography and advise on policy options. The chairman has been asked to report as soon as possible.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to seek to persuade more women in high risk categories to obtain cervical cancer screening.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish his guidance to doctors on severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: I am pleased to say that we have published a handbook of guidance for adjudicating medical practitioners on severe disablement allowance. The handbook was issued last year in draft form to various voluntary organisations representing disabled people, and has been revised in the light of the many helpful and constructive comments they have made. I have arranged for copies of the handbook to be placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Rates

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend the Rating and Valuation (Scotland) Act 1956;

(2) if he has any plans to review the system of rating of sporting land.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Re-Chem Plants

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what efforts have been made by his officials and by the various investigations into the operation of Re-Chem plants to seek to acquire, from ornithological and wildlife societies and their members resident in central Scotland, any evidence of unusual or unexplained morbidity and mortality among wild birds and animals within a radius of 20 miles from Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, for the period 1975 to the present.

Mr. John MacKay: When the group chaired by Professor Lenihan was set up, it advertised its formation and invited interested persons and groups to submit evidence. The group's report did not draw attention to any unusual or unexplained morbidity or mortality among wild birds and animals. Moreover, since 1973 the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has undertaken investigations of animal mortality through the operation of its wildlife incident investigation service at agricultural scientific services, East Craigs. This service has actively sought and received the co-operation of many public and private organisations concerned with animal welfare and wildlife conservation throughout Scotland.

Toxic Wastes

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to seek to establish that no river, burn or subterranean water-course in central Scotland has been polluted by toxic wastes.

Mr. Ancram: The necessary provisions already exist. River purification boards have a statutory duty to exercise functions for the prevention of pollution of surface and underground waters, including control of the discharge of toxic wastes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

PAYE

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any variations from normal national instructions on assessing of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers have been authorised or condoned in any of the Inland Revenue tax offices working to set up the computerised COP system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Districts working to set up the computerised COP system follow the normal national instructions on assessing of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers. However, the period during which assessing work is normally carried out may be varied in particular tax offices to fit in with the setting up timetable. No other variations have been centrally authorised.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of the Inland Revenue regions in which any variation from normal national instructions on assessing of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers has been authorised or conducted in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Temporary local variations in practice may occur from time to time in tax districts, but except in relation to the setting up of the COP system no variation from normal national instructions on assessing of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers has been authorised centrally in the past three years.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, for each Inland Revenue region, the number of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers not assessed or otherwise cleared for *(a)* the most recent year ended 5 April and *(b)* all earlier years, in October of each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The following table shows details of the number of pay-as-you-earn taxpayers in each Inland Revenue region not assessed or otherwise cleared for *(a)* the most recent 5 April and *(b)* earlier years, in October of each of the last three years. The Inland Revenue is concerned at the present level of these arrears and is taking all possible steps to improve the position.

Region	*October 1985*		*October 1984*		*October 1983*	
	(a) 1984-85	*(b) 1983-84 and earlier*	*(a) 1983-84*	*(b) 1982-83 and earlier*	*(a) 1982-83*	*(b) 1981-82 and earlier*
London East	101,833	34,134	101,885	22,575	147,030	24,705
London North	141,158	39,200	121,077	29,453	102,424	27,276
London South	163,217	46,114	101,248	32,990	114,509	29,192
London West	170,418	55,700	149,432	41,847	139,951	47,550
Eastern Counties	1,048,322	214,509	997,892	141,957	641,267	91,203
Greater Manchester	1,693,365	120,306	909,106	50,024	396,824	42,732
North	1,077,355	100,959	870,522	63,133	405,122	48,925
North West	1,062,451	111,183	904,883	45,653	461,854	36,362
South East	898,922	270,457	1,067,196	197,280	652,853	145,105
South West	622,182	88,151	560,746	46,511	337,243	35,106
South Yorkshire	1,298,899	179,257	1,331,240	101,208	669,630	78,121
West Midlands	1,804,155	283,228	1,443,733	145,232	725,715	64,509
Wales	242,035	47,144	395,144	34,143	173,855	20,208
Scotland	416,037	69,524	879,614	59,419	133,682	72,357
Northern Ireland	254,166	41,813	272,664	18,144	90,551	18,621

Inland Revenue (Post)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, for each Inland Revenue region, the total number of items of post in tax offices *(a)* over 14 days old and *(b)* over two months old, in October of each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The following table shows details of unworked papers in each Inland Revenue region for the last there years. The Inland Revenue is concerned at the present level of these arrears and is taking all possible steps to improve the position.

Region	October 1985		October 1984		October 1983	
	Total post over 14 days old	Over 2 months old	Total post over 14 days old	Over 2 months old	Total post over 14 days old	Over 2 months old
London East	62,827	12,392	51,929	6,088	37,822	4,490
London North	78,904	10,066	60,741	4,334	45,104	2,943
London South	65,695	3,811	62,924	6,893	58,319	4,323
London West	85,336	13,540	85,849	14,389	64,820	13,639
Eastern Counties	324,424	90,135	270,372	54,939	149,743	11,074
Greater Manchester	225,879	26,008	80,715	977	36,212	175
North	137,285	11,404	105,940	9,555	52,430	1,826
North West	160,450	23,825	174,722	5,457	372,444	5,949
South East	375,555	93,717	327,156	50,715	227,873	17,102
South West	232,102	51,571	142,466	16,190	79,889	4,312
South Yorkshire	304,682	57,544	196,005	25,640	103,073	10,134
West Midlands	432,447	127,198	247,366	50,292	164,358	20,041
Wales	142,140	23,524	163,866	759	43,404	1,119
Scotland	106,192	3,820	58,626	2,025	39,651	5,749
Northern Ireland	34,110	909	22,643	72	20,388	142

Inland Revenue (Staff)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will describe the duration and cost of training *(a)* a tax officer and *(b)* a tax officer higher grade.

Mr. Moore: A tax officer undergoes an initial course of training lasting about 11 months. The cost of this training — including salary and overhead costs — is estimated at about £3,000.

A tax officer (higher grade) undergoes a course of training lasting about 23 months. The cost of this training —including salary and overhead costs—is estimated at about £7,500. A tax officer (higher grade) employed on management duties can be nominated for a one-week management course costing about £500.

VAT

Mr. Dykes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of value added tax in money terms collected by United Kingdom authorities in 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Mr. Gow: The figures are as follows:

Table 7.—Value added tax: tax returns received and tax paid and repaid

	Returns received ('000)			Payments and repayments (£ million)		
	Payments	Repayments	Total	Payments	Repayments	Net receipts
1973-74	—	—	—	2,663·9	1,193·2	1,470·7
1974-75	—	—	—	4,160·5	1,651·0	2,509·5
1975-76	3,356·0	3,051·2	6,407·2	5,165·3	1,710·4	3,454·9
1976-77	3,390·2	2,885·4	6,275·6	5,640·9	1,871·4	3,769·5
1977-78	3,586·7	2,727·3	6,314·0	6,382·8	2,148·0	4,234·8
1978-79	*3,411·7	*2,599·9	*6,011·6	7,020·8	2,183·3	4,837·5
1979-80	3,290·7	2,564·2	5,854·9	12,637·6	4,448·3	8,189·3
1980-81	†3,229·0	†2,352·7	†5,581·7	16,766·8	5,800·2	10,966·6
1981-82	2,168·6	1,950·3	4,118·9	18,040·7	6,184·9	11,855·8
1982-83	3,262·4	2,823·3	6,085·7	20,985·9	7,170·4	13,815·5
1983-84	3,452·9	2,944·3	6,397·2	22,950·9	7,732·9	15,218·0

* Returns received up to 22 February 1979
† Returns received up to 8 March 1981

Table 8.—Value added tax: registration and deregistrations

	Approximate number of registered persons at 31 March	Approximate number of		Net increase/ decrease in register
		New registrations	Deregistrations	
1973	981,200	—	—	—
1973-74	1,196,700	—	—	+215,500
1974-75	1,223,800	—	—	+27,100
1975-76	1,250,800	163,100	136,100	+27,000
1976-77	1,271,300	157,600	137,100	+20,500

	Approximate number of registered persons at 31 March	Approximate number of		
		New registrations	Deregistrations	Net increase/ decrease in register
1977-78	1,274,200	160,000	157,100	+2,900
1978-79*	1,292,300	229,100	211,000	+18,100
1979-80†	1,327,200	100,900	66,000	+34,900
1980-81	1,338,000	150,900	140,100	+10,800
1981-82	1,379,500	160,600	119,100	+41,500
1982-83	1,398,300	169,100	150,300	+18,800
1983-84	1,433,100	184,200	149,400	+34,800

* Number of registered persons and changes in the register at 27 September 1979
† Changes in the register between 28 September 1979 and 31 March 1980

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Company Liquidations

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms have gone into receivership or liquidation in each year since 1979 and in 1985 to the latest available month, in Coventry, the west midlands and nationally.

Mr. Howard: The information relating to insolvencies that is available is given in the table:

	Bankruptcies			Company Liquidations
	Coventry County Court	County Courts in West Midlands Region	Total England and Wales	England and Wales
1979	18	264	3,500	4,537
1980	27	325	4,038	6,890
1981	28	370	5,151	8,596
1982	43	492	5,700	12,067
1983	60	619	7,032	13,406
1984	68	700	8,229	13,721
1985*	47	450	5,033	10,753

* To September.

The bankruptcy figures cover all individuals and partnerships; receiving orders, administration orders and deeds of arrangement are included. Approximately three quarters of all bankruptcies relate to unincorporated businesses. Figures for bankruptcies after 1 October 1984 are not comparable with earlier periods because of changes in monetary limits on bankruptcy proceedings and deposits on petitions. Company liquidations include both compulsory and creditors' voluntary liquidations. Figures of company liquidations are not analysed by area.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will update the figure for the United Kingdom share of trade in manufactured goods in 1984 and give the figure for 1985 in the table set out in his written answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) on 15 November 1984, *Official Report*, column *304*.

Mr. Channon: The figures are 7·6 per cent. for 1984 and a provisional estimate of 7·7 per cent. for the first half of 1985.

Car Imports

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he estimates that a United Kingdom market of around 1·8 million vehicle sales per year is sufficient to sustain the growth in car imports, principally from Spain and Comecon countries, together with the growth of Nissan's United Kingdom produced product line and the expanding production of other United Kingdom car manufacturing companies.

Mr. Butcher: We consider that there is plenty of room both for fully competitive existing United Kingdom manufacturers to increase their market share and for a Nissan plant producing British cars with a high level of local content.

Allied Lyons

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the proposed takeover of Allied Lyons by Elders IXL; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The proposed merger is currently being considered by the Office of Fair Trading. My right hon. Friend will announce his decision as soon as practicable.

Companies (Foreign Subsidiaries)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many subsidiaries of British companies have been set up abroad for the periods 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to 1984, respectively.

Mr. Howard: The information is not available.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why three under-secretary posts at the Export

Credits Guarantee Department are occupied by non-career civil servants from the private sector; and if he will state their previous experience.

Mr. Channon: This is not the case. There are no non-career civil servants at under-secretary level in ECGD. But I intend that some appointments by secondment from the private sector should be made in due course, as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 24 July 1985 at column *570*. An advertisement for one under-secretary post has appeared recently.

Overseas Trade (Support and Promotion)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the sums spent by his Department at constant prices on overseas trade support and promotion for each of the past seven years.

Mr. Channon: The following figures show gross and net expenditure by the British Overseas Trade Board in constant price terms:

	£ million (September 1979)	
	Gross expenditure	*Net expenditure*
1979-80	25·7	21·2
1980-81	19·8	16·1
1981-82	19·2	15·2
1982-83	20·8	16·3
1983-84	20·5	15·3
1984-85	*24·5	*18·7
1985-86 (Budget)	24·0	16·9

* Expenditure on publicity and promotion was transferred to the BOTB budget from the CoI with effect from 1984-85. On a constant price basis the expenditure amounted to £1·5 million in 1984-85.

British Telecom

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will institute a departmental inquiry into all the aspects of the circumstances of the British Telecom share flotation, with particular reference to the extent to which members of underwriting firms were able to avoid the rules limiting the number of shares available to any individual by dealing in the shares in their own names once the shares had been issued to their firms.

Mr. Pattie: No.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what basis members of Kleinwort Benson dealt in British Telecommunication shares on their own account at the time of the flotation; and to what limit of total shareholding they were each restricted.

Mr. Pattie: I refer to the answer my hon. Friend gave on 22 March at column *641*. Kleinwort Benson employees participated through the public application and allocation arrangements.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list of the firms with which British Telecom shares were placed at the beginning of the offer period; and if he will specify how many shares each firm underwrote.

Mr. Pattie: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

PCW Syndicates

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to seek to bring about a resolution of the difficulties at Lloyd's arising from the losses recorded by the PCW syndicates and their successors.

Mr. Howard: This is a matter for the numerous parties involved. However, I am keeping in touch with the Lloyd's authorities about any developments.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to seek to ensure adequate provision in the accounts of firms at Lloyd's which may have contingent financial obligations arising from a settlement of the dispute arising out of the losses sustained by the PCW syndicates and their successors.

Mr. Howard: None. In so far as any such provision may be found necessary, the amount to be provided is a matter to be determined by those concerned in conjunction with their auditors.

Directors (Prosecutions)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases the official receiver acting as liquidator has recommended that charges be brought against directors for either *(a)* criminal offences and *(b)* misfeasance and breach of trust in each of the years since 1979 to the latest date available.

Mr. Howard: Details of reports submitted by official receivers alleging criminal offences and of prosecutions undertaken are given in the annual reports laid before both Houses of Parliament under section 451 of the Companies Act 1948 (now section 729 of the Companies Act 1985) and which are available in the Library of the House. No record is maintained of actions for misfeasance or breach of trust brought against directors by the official receiver when acting as liquidator nor by other liquidators.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases in each of the years since 1979 to the latest date available charges have been brought by his Department against directors for *(a)* criminal offences and *(b)* misfeasance and breach of duty.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Companies (Legal Proceedings)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases his Department has funded litigation under section 37 of the Companies Act 1967, in each of the years since 1975 to the latest available date.

Mr. Howard: In respect of one company, in 1978.

Companies (Records)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessments he has made of the implications for the discharge of his statutory obligations regarding the regulation of companies and the conduct of company directors of the policy of joint stock banks of destroying records three years after the transactions concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The expression joint stock banks usually means the clearing banks. They are public companies and required to keep their records for six years under section 222 of the Companies Act 1985. There is no reason to assume any widespread disregard of the Companies Act requirements as to the preservation of accounting records.

Leeds Chamber of Commerce (Trade Delegation)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will now instruct the British Overseas Trade Board to withdraw its financial contribution to the Leeds chamber of commerce trade delegation to South Africa.

Mr. Channon: No. I intend to honour the specific commitment we have already entered into in respect of this outward mission, which is due to set out within the next month. But, in line with the agreement reached by Commonwealth leaders in Nassau, the BOTB will not be providing financial support for trade missions to South Africa thereafter.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is his intention to invite the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to examine the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Howard: The British Steel Corporation is in the 1985 programme of investigations by te Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to deal with abuse and unlicensed use of citizens band radio.

Mr. Butcher: In May this year my Department's radio investigation service (RIS) carried out concerted campaigns to counter CB licence evasion and abuse in the Cumbria, Chester, Southampton, Portsmouth, Swindon, Cardiff and Glasgow areas. In 1,200 visits the RIS found widespread abuse and licence evasion and took appropriate action ranging from warnings to seizing equipment with a view to court proceedings.

In the areas in which the campaigns took place there has been a noticeable drop in the level of licence abuse. The number of CB licences issued has since increased by 7 per cent. compared with a decline of 6 per cent. in the country as a whole. I am greatly encouraged by these results and have instructed the RIS to carry out similar campaigns throughout the country.

In 1985 to the end of September 714 offenders were prosecuted and convicted for CB related offences. The average level of fine was £73 with average costs of £30 awarded against offenders. In 462 cases, the courts ordered forfeiture of the equipment.

Serious degradation of the CB service is caused by the use of offensive and threatening language and the jamming of channels by the playing of music. In the heavy penalties awarded the courts have recognised the serious nature of such conduct. On the most recent cases in which offensive language or playing music was the initial reason for the RIS taking enforcement action, the level of fines has been some 50 per cent. higher than for other cases. Individual fines have ranged up to £200 and in one case a persistent offender received a nine months' suspended prison sentence.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Assembly (Consultations)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why he agreed at the intergovernmental EEC conference to consultation with the European Assembly before any proposals were finalised for the EEC summit meeting in December.

Mr. Rifkind: The European Parliament was consulted about convening the intergovernmental conference in accordance with article 236 of the EEC treaty. We have agreed to keep the Parliament informed of progress in the conference and to report to it the outcome.

Elena Gurevich

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics about Elena Gurevich; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We have made clear on numerous occasions our concern at the refusal of the Soviet authorities to allow Jewish and other Soviet citizens who wish to leave the Soviet Union to do so. I raised this question most recently with Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kornienko during my visit to Moscow in July. We shall continue to press the Soviet authorities to adopt a more reasonable attitude to the question of emigration and family reunification, and shall seek to ensure that the many individual cases involved, including that of Miss Gurevich, are not lost from view.

Rainbow Warrior

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long after the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior Her Majesty's Government made representations to the French Government on the matter.

Mr. Eggar: The Rainbow Warrior was sunk on 10 July. The French Prime Minister admitted French agents carried out the operation on Sunday 22 September. On 24 September, the British ambassador in Paris delivered a Note to the French Foreign Ministry drawing attention to the fact that the Rainbow Warrior was a British ship and urging swift compensation. A similar Note was handed to the French ambassador in London on 25 September. Representations to the French Government would not have been justified while the facts were unclear and the matter was still under investigation.

Foreign States (Recognition)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria regarding the use of violence in the pursuit of political objectives Her Majesty's Government apply in deciding whether to recognise foreign states.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend may wish to refer to a written answer of 25 April 1980, at column *277*, which

confirms that we recognise states in accordance with common international doctrine. In considering whether to recognise states we take into account all available information and all relevant factors.

Visas

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any plans within the European Economic Community to harmonise approaches to the need for and the issuing of visas to other countries.

Mr. Rifkind: The report of the People's Europe Committee to the European Council in March 1985 called for work to be put in hand on the definition and gradual application of a common visa policy. The matter is also referred to in the Commission's White Paper on the internal market and is now under discussion.

Northern Ireland (Border Security)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the recent statement of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary alleging that the lack of priority given by the Dublin Government to security enabled terrorists to organise, plan and stage attacks on Northern Ireland from just across the border; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: On 21 October the Secretary of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs conveyed to Her Majesty's Ambassador at Dublin the Irish Government's serious concern at press reports of a lecture given by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Houston, Texas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was able to assure the Irish Government after investigation of the matter that the Chief Constable had been seriously misrepresented.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 28th October 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Private Prosecutions

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General if he will list all instances of private prosecutions taken over by the Director of Public Prosecutions in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement on general policy followed in taking over such prosecutions.

The Solicitor-General: In deciding whether to exercise his powers under section 4 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1979 in relation to a prosecution instituted by a person in a private capacity, the Director of Public Prosecutions first considers whether the evidence is sufficient to justify continuation of those proceedings. Where the evidence is sufficient in this respect, he considers whether the continuation of the prosecution would be in the public interest and whether that same public interest requires him to intervene and assume responsibility for it. In exceptional circumstances he will intervene to discontinue proceedings which appear to be vexatious or constitute an abuse of process.

The director adopts the same approach when considering a request for intervention made after a conviction has resulted (that is to conduct any appeal) but in such circumstances he takes into account that the public interest requires that ordinarily convictions properly recorded by the criminal courts should not be allowed bo be quashed simply for want of prosecution.

The director does not keep statistics specifically relating to interventions under section 4 of the 1979 Act but there have been at leust three such cases in the last three years. The defendants were:

Gary Austin (St. Albans Crown Court)
Eric Miller (Maidstone Crown Court)
Royal College of Surgeons (Croydon Crown Court on appeal from Bromley Magistrates Court).

Duty Solicitor Scheme

Mr. Dobson asked the Attorney-General what plans he has to implement the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 with regard to the creation of a Londonwide duty solicitor scheme.

The Solicitor-General: We intend that a duty solicitor scheme covering the whole of England and Wales should come into force on 1 January 1986, at the same time as the relevant provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The Lord Chancellor has invited the Law Society to proceed with the arrangements to make the scheme uniformly effective as soon as possible.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Mason asked the Attorney-General if he will list the trade union consultative meetings that have taken place with the Council of Civil Service Unions and others on the proposals to establish an independent Crown prosecution service; if he is satisfied that all consultative procedures have been followed; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: In 1985 my officials have had formal meetings with a combined trade union side, consisting of representatives of the Council of Civil Service Unions and the National and Local Government Officers Association, on the following occasions:

26 February
19 March
28 March
23 April
14 May
13 June
9 July
6 August
3 September
1 October

In addition there have been meetings with individual trade unions at national and local level and with other representive bodies, but these are too numerous to list.

I am satisfied that officials have consulted to the maximum extent practicable within the confines of the timetable necessary to ensure establishment of the Crown prosecution service prior to the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

In addition my right hon. and learned Friend and I have had discussions on a number of occasions, both formal and informal, with representatives of the staff of existing prosecuting solicitors departments, most recently on 11 September and 8 October, when I received delegations from the Prosecuting Solicitors Society of England and Wales and the Crown prosecution service trade union group respectively.

Mr. Mason asked the Attorney-General to what extent he has given assurances to the trade unions and prosecuting solicitors that their future prospects and salaries will be secured under the independent Crown prosecution service; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend has assured the staff of existing prosecuting solicitors departments and their representative bodies that the staff who will serve in the Crown prosecution service will be remunerated on a basis that should ensure that they provide the high standards that will be required.

It is the Government's intention, as has consistantly been reflected in what my right hon. and learned Friend has said in his discussions with representatives of the staff of existing prosecuting solicitors departments, that career prospects in the new service should also be such as to attract and retain staff of the necessary calibre.

On 30 March 1984 my right hon. and learned Friend told a meeting of the Prosecuting Solicitors' Society that its members' career prospects would be enhanced by reason of the larger total requirement of the new service for qualified prosecutors.

Mr. Mason asked the Attorney-General whether he will delay the implementation of the independent Crown prosecution service, especially the transfer regulations timetable affecting the metropolitan counties, until satisfactory assurances regarding the future of their grades, salaries and resident offices have been agreed with prosecuting solicitors and other officers in the six provincial areas; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: It is intended to establish the service in the present six metropolitan counties and the

county of Durham on 1 April 1986. It would not be in the public interest or the interests of the staff affected to subject prosecution arrangements in the metropolitan areas to two separate disturbances. Discussions on each of the matters referred to in the right hon. Member's question and on related matters are currently taking place between officials of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the relevant representative bodies, with a view to arrangements which will suffice to attract and retain staff of the requisite quality.

Mr. Mason asked the Attorney-General what assurances have been given to the South Yorkshire county prosecuting solicitors' department working at Barnsley magistrates' court that no further upheaval in transfers of men and offices will take place when the independent Crown prosecution service is established.

The Solicitor-General: No assurances have been give. To be efficient, effective and economical the Crown prosecution service will need to be structured on a system of area and branch offices. Moreover, it is desirable that, as soon as practicable, it should be housed in accommodation separate from the police. All changes will be affected with proper consideration for the interests of the staff concerned and, where appropriate, after consultation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in detail his latest proposals to the teachers involved in the present dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: Offers of pay increases for school teachers are made by the management panel of the Burnham primary and secondary committee. The last formal offer was made in that committee on 12 September and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The offer was constructed on the Government's willingness to see an extra £1,250 million spent on teachers' pay over the next four years in order to develop a new career and promotion structure and to clarify the range of teachers' professional duties. In addressing these objectives the offer proposed:

(i) the creation of an extra 70,000 promotions, associated with a restructuring of pay scales, from September 1986;

(ii) an increase of £480 or 5 per cent. for all teachers from 1 April 1985;

(iii) the merger of scales 1 and 2 from 1 September 1985, providing an additional increment at that date for those on the maximum of scale 1;

(iv) a further 1 per cent. increase for all teachers from 1 November 1985; and

(v) an additional increment for all teachers on the maxima of scales 2, 3, 4 and the senior teacher scale from 31 March 1986.

The average increase during the year would have been nearly 6 per cent. and the average increase by the end of March 1986 would have been just over 8 per cent. From September 1986, all new teachers would have received a starting salary of £7,035 a year and all teachers would have been able to progress, even without promotion, to a salary of £10,000 a year or about £2,000 more than that now available for those on the scale 1 maximum. By the same date head teachers and their deputies would have received increases amounting to about 18 per cent. in most cases. This offer was rejected by the teacher unions after just 20 minutes consideration. Developments since that rejection were outlined in my statement to the House on 22 October at column 152.

Academic Staffs

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many academic staff in universities, polytechnics and higher education colleges have been *(a)* made redundant or *(b)* taken early retirement, since 1979; and what these figures represent as a percentage of the total academic staff for each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The number of academic staff in British universities made redundant or taking early retirement since the scheme started in 1981-82 is 3,317. This represents 7·7 per cent. of the 1979-80 staff, 7·5 per cent. of the 1980-81 staff, 7·6 per cent. of the 1981-82 staff, 7·7 per cent. of the 1982-83 staff and 7·7 per cent. of the 1983-84 staff.

Since 1979 the number of polytechnic teachers in England and Wales who had applied under the premature retirement scheme was 1,784. If this is expressed as a percentage of the full-time staff in each financial year from 1978-79 to 1983-84, the percentages are 10·6 per cent., 10·5 per cent., 10·6 per cent., 11·0 per cent., 11·2 per cent., and 11·5 per cent. respectively.

Redundancies and early retirements for staff in other colleges engaged in higher education cannot be separated from all other further education staff.

Students (Statistics)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications were made by mature students for entry to courses in higher education for each of the last 10 years; and how many were accepted.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of applicants and acceptances, for students aged 21 and over through the Universities' Central Council on Admissions scheme, have been as follows:

	Applicants	*Acceptances*
1975	22,034	8,680
1976	25,648	9,159
1977	27,296	9,415
1978	28,397	9,738
1979	29,869	9,262
1980	27,691	9,454
1981	24,225	8,804
1982	22,068	7,789
1983	22,877	7,918
1984	24,524	8,702

Similar figures for public sector higher education are not available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of overseas students studying in higher education in European Economic Community states, the United States of America and Japan, and the percentage they represent within the indicated student population as a whole.

Mr. Brooke: The data requested are shown in the following table:

Host Country	Year	Overseas students in higher education (thousands)	*Percentage of all higher education students
Belgium†	1982	11·9	12·3
Denmark	1981	3·0	2·9
France‡	1981	108·6	12·0
Germany	1982	71·4	5·1
Greece	1975	10·0	8·6
Ireland	1981	2·9	4·9
Italy	1980	27·8	2·5
Luxembourg	1981	0·1	7·3
Netherlands	1982	4·6	1·2
United States¶	1981	326·3	2·6
Japan●	1982	8·1	0·3
United Kingdom■	1982	45·6	•5·2
	1983	45·3	•5·1

* Including part-time students where appropriate.
† Universities and equivalent degree-granting institutions only.
‡ Universities only.
Figures refer only to students enrolled in institutions in Luxembourg; higher education students mainly study outside Luxembourg.
¶ Includes private sector.
●Includes private sector and correspondence courses.
■ Excludes private sector colleges.
• These percentages increase to 8·0 and 7·8 respectively when based on full-time students alone.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many new enrolments of *(a)* full and *(b)* part-time students in colleges and institutes of advanced further education in England, excluding polytechnics, have occurred in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of first-year enrolments of full-time and part-time students on advanced courses in colleges and institutes of further education in England for the period from 1979 to 1984 (the latest date for which figures are available) are as follows:

First year enrolments on advanced courses in public sector establishments (excluding polytechnics) England; 1 November each year.

	Full-time	Part-time
1979	34,010	57,260
1980	33,690	62,490
1981	37,010	65,140
1982	39,490	66,180
1983	39,620	68,510
1984	40,500	68,990

Notes:
1. All figures relate to total student numbers i.e. home, EC and overseas students.
2. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications there have been for places on postgraduate certificate in education courses in each of the last five years for which figures are available, in total, and broken down into the following categories *(a)* primary phase, *(b)* secondary phase, *(c)* mathematics and science and *(d)* arts.

Mr. Chris Patten: Applications to postgraduate courses of initial teacher training as registered by the clearing houses are as follows:

	1981 final figures	1982 as at 20 October 1982	1983 as at 5 October 1983	1984 as at 24 October 1984	1985 as at 16 October 1985
Total	18,783	19,020	18,473	18,670	17,079
Primary	3,145	2,761	4,026	4,943	5,371
Secondary	15,638	16,259	14,447	13,727	11,708
Maths/Science	5,032	5,375	5,232	4,648	3,758
Arts*	7,939	8,186	7,150	7,043	6,378

* Includes art, drama, history, music, RE, languages, English.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university applicants there were in each of the last 20 years; how many candidates were finally accepted in each of those years; and what the acceptance rate represents as a percentage of applications for each of those years.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of applicants and acceptances through the Universities' Central Council on Admission scheme have been as follows:

Year	Applicants	Acceptances	Acceptance rate
1965	80,033	36,565	45·7
1966	90,952	44,526	49,0
1967	101,580	50,499	49·7

Year	Applicants	Acceptances	Acceptance rate
1968	110,419	53,644	48·6
1969	114,289	57,624	50·4
1970	116,735	58,777	50·4
1971	123,984	58,933	47·5
1972	124,359	60,510	48·7
1973	124,634	61,959	49·7
1974	125,780	64,063	50·9
1975	131,478	71,211	54·2
1976	142,307	73,932	52·0
1977	153,616	77,855	50·7
1978	157,506	80,530	51·1
1979	166,362	82,398	49·5
1980	168,354	84,695	50·3
1981	167,096	80,341	48·1
1982	171,496	77,752	45·3
1983	172,738	74,860	43·3
1984	173,674	77,431	44·6

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students in *(a)* British universities and *(b)* polytechnics have met or are currently meeting the full cost of tuition fees at the home rate, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Brooke: Information is not available in the form requested. It is estimated that only about 1 or 2 per cent. of home students in higher education are not in receipt of mandatory or discretionary awards.

Teaching Staff

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teaching staff were employed in higher education in May 1979 and for each year since.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of teaching staff in British universities and in public sector higher education in England since 1978-79 are as follows:

thousands

	Universities Great Britain (Full-time only)	†*Maintained Institutions England (Full-time equivalent)*	‡*Direct Grant and Voluntary Institutions England (Full-time only)*
1978-79	33·4	25·8	3·5
1979-80	34·1	26·0	3·3
1980-81	34·1	25·4	3·1
1981-82	33·7	25·7	3·0
1982-83	31·8	26·2	2·9
1983-84	32·4	25·9	‖ 2·8

* As at 31 December.
† Estimated, as at January of each year.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many engineering undergraduates there are expected to be in universities in the academic year 1985-86; and how this compares with each year since 1979;

(2) how many mathematics and computer undergraduates there are expected to be in the academic year 1985-86; and how this compares with each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of undergraduates in British universities were as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Engineering and technology					
Full-time and sandwich	35,817	36,761	36,991	36,531	35,418
Part-time	146	168	155	151	130
*Mathematics and computing**					
Full-time and sandwich	11,450	12,695	13,740	14,355	14,717
Part-time	173	211	199	183	196

* Excluding mathematics and physics and other combinations.
Figures are not yet available for 1984, but an increase is expected.

† Including a small non-advanced component, as at March of each year.
‖ Provisional.
Figures are not yet available for 1984-85.

Lecturers (Pay)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* current pay scales for lecturers in *(a)* universities and *(b)* polytechnics.

Sir Keith Joseph: The current pay scales are as follows:

Universities (non-clinical academics)	*1 April 1984* £
Assistant Lecturer and Lecturer	7,520
	7,980
	8,450
	8,920
	9,390
	9,860
	10,330
	10,720
	11,205
	11,675
	12,150
	12,635
	13,120
	13,625
	14,135
	14,925
Senior Lecturer/Reader	14,135
	14,775
	15,150
	15,665
	16,170
	16,675
	17,190
	17,705

Polytechnics	1 April 1985 £
Lecturer Grade I	6,207
	6,462
	6,726
	6,990
	7,251
	7,536
	7,806
	8,121
	8,439
	8,751
	9,066
	9,372
	9,675
	9,972
	10,266
	11,037
Lecturer Grade II	7,926
	8,412
	8,886
	9,357
	9,816
	10,260
	10,764
	11,220
	11,733
	12,216
	12,705
Senior Lecturer	11,733
	12,216
	12,705
	13,239
	13,785
	14,280
	14,763
Principal Lecturer	13,749
	14,247
	14,745
	15,309
	15,801
	16,302
	16,800
	17,289

Overseas Students (Fees)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recommendations have been issued about fees for overseas students, non-EEC, on courses of further and higher education in the academic year 1985-86.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's policy is that overseas students who began their courses on or after 1 September 1980 should pay fees that cover the cost of their education here, but it is for individual institutions and authorities to determine the fees that they charge such students in accordance with the Government's policy and in the light of their own particular circumstances. The University Grants Committee has however recommended that universities should charge at least the following minimum fees to such overseas students during the current academic year:

	£
Arts courses	3,310
Science courses	4,350
Clinical courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science	8,050

Similarly, the Council of Local Education Authorities has recommended that local authority institutions should charge at least the following minimum fees to such overseas students:

	£
Advanced courses	3,310
Non-advanced courses	1,820

School Admissions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, for each local education authority, how many admission appeals have been made to education appeals committees for *(a)* the voluntary and *(b)* the state sectors under the provisions of the Education Act 1981; how many applicants have been successful in their appeals; and how many cases have subsequently been referred to the Commission for Local Administration on grounds of maladministration by the local education authority involved, in each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

School Buildings

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to improve school buildings, in the light of the statement by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools in its recent expenditure survey that the state of school buildings are a cause of growing concern.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local authorities themselves to determine repairs and maintenance priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances. We have made clear our view that this area should be given priority within the resources available. The Government's plans for local authority expenditure on education for the current year provide scope for some improvement in the level of provision for repairs and maintenance, provided costs can be contained and feasible savings made elsewhere. In order to help authorities make the best use of the resources available, the Department published in March this year guidelines for determining maintenance priorities and for setting up cost-effective maintenance programmes.

Schools (Hygiene)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department concerning *(a)* the standards of hygiene in school cloakrooms and *(b)* outbreaks of dysentery in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The standard of hygiene in cloakrooms of schools which are maintained by a local education authority is a matter for that authority. While my right hon. Friend is aware of a small number of outbreaks of dysentery in schools in recent years, the Department does not collect information on either subject. Advice on all aspects of health and hygiene in relation to their schools is available to education authorities from their district health authority and local environmental health officer.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement concerning the Government's present position on the use of corporal punishment in schools, in the light of European Court judgments.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government are considering the appropriate course of action to take in the light of the decision not to proceed with the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill this Session announced on 23 July 1985 at column 863.

REPLAN Scheme

Mr. Frank. Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet received advice from the Department steering committee for the adult unemployed on whether the REPLAN scheme should be extended beyond 1987.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Friday 25 October 1985 at column 263. In reaching his decision my right hon. Friend will of course take account of any views which the programme's steering committee put to him.

Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether a final decision has been reached about the future work of the plant breeding station at Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth is an institute of the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC), which receives a grant-in-aid from the Department's science budget.

I understand that the AFRC is shortly to publish a statement of forward policy based on its long-term view discussion paper and subsequent consultation. The council is committed to supporting a strong research programme at the Welsh plant breeding station relating to the needs of livestock and grassland enterprises of the wetter west of Britain. The station will make a major contribution to the council's integrated research programme for the animal production and grasslands sector.

I understand that the AFRC expects to make a grant of £3·01 million to the Welsh plant breeding station for recurrent expenditure in 1986-87. This compares with £3·09 million in the current year and takes account of the reduced needs of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for commissioned research in 1986-87.

I understand further that the director expects fully to maintain current work on hills and uplands, nitrogen fixation, nutrient cycling and basic developmental studies of grass and clover. There will however be reductions in strategic research on crop physiology and grass cytogenetics, as well as in commissioned research.

The reductions are likely to cause 25 posts to be lost at the station, some of which may involve compulsory redundancy.

Liverpool Polytechnic

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of funding of Liverpool polytechnic.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend accepted the national advisory body's recommendation that £19·003 million (including £150,000 selective assistance for research) from the advanced further education (AFE) pool for 1985-86 should be allocated to Liverpool city council in respect of Liverpool polytechnic's recurrent expenditure. In addition £1·36 million for polytechnic building projects and £1·49 million for AFE equipment were included in the city's allocation of prescribed capital expenditure.

School Places

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much the number of secondary school and primary school places has fallen in each year since 1974; and what are his current targets for reductions in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Dunn: Latest targets for the removal of surplus places in primary and secondary schools were published in the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9428: the target for the period April 1975 to March 1985 was 790,000 places accumulating to over one million places by March 1987. A separate target for March 1986 was not published. The reduction in the numbers of primary and secondary school places in the years for which the information is available are as follows:

'000 places

	Primary	Secondary	Cumulative total
April 1975 to June 1978	47·0	26·8	73·8
July 1978 to December 1979	47·3	18·1	139·2
1980	63·2	18·8	221·2
1981	128·5	43·9	393·6
1982	111·2	37·6	542·4
1983	102·3	55·1	699·8
1984	88·4	66·9	855·1

Funding (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of funding for schools in the maintained sector in Liverpool.

Mr. Dunn: As with any local education authority, it is for the city of Liverpool itself to determine the level of funding of its education service consonant with its statutory responsibilities.

Higher Education (Green Paper)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his meeting with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in Leicester at the end of September; and what representations were made to him during that meeting about his Green Paper on higher education.

Mr. Brooke: I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the talk which my right hon. Friend gave at the meeting on 26 September and a copy has been placed in the Library. The vice-chancellors welcomed what my right hon. Friend said and then exchanged views and information with him and myself about the proposals in Cmnd. 9524 and other matters. We have a much better understanding of each other's concerns as a result.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Computers in Schools

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the uptake of his Department's schemes to put microcomputers and peripheral equipment in secondary and primary schools and what further plans he has for seeking to extend computer literacy in schools.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has run three schemes over the last four years to help schools buy computers and related equipment; 6,511 secondary schools and 27,407 primary schools have received help towards the purchase of computers and related equipment under the schemes, representing over 95 per cent. of those eligible.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry, in reply at column *453-54* to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 23 July, announced additional support of £3·5 million for local education authorities and independent schools to enable them to buy more educational software. That scheme will begin on 1 January and full details have been sent to those concerned. My Department will also be continuing to take a close interest in other developments in educational computing and will consider further steps as appropriate.

Intermediate Assisted Area Grants

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many west midlands firms have benefited under the intermediate assisted area grant scheme to date, how many extra employees have been taken on as a result, and what is the average cost per new employee.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since the designation of intermediate area status on 29 November 1984, 158 applications have been approved for regional selective assistance totalling £18·020 million towards projects costing £159·271 million in the west midlands. Of these approvals, some 148, with an offer value of £12·773 million, are for projects creating 4,711 new jobs.

Pirate Radio

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial, manpower and other resources are currently allocated by his Department for the detection, surveillance and prevention of pirate radio broadcasting.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Industries

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's shipbuilding and marine engineering industries.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set up an inquiry under section 14 of the Companies Act 1985 into the affairs of the Greater London Enterprise Board and the London Enterprise Property Company.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. and learned Friend has the power to investigate the affairs of companies under the provisions of section 431 and section 432 of the Companies Act 1985. He also has more limited powers under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985.

The police are already making inquiries concerning the affairs of these companies and I see no reason to exercise these powers at present. I will, however, keep the situation under review and consider any further information the hon. Member has about these companies.

Iran (Car Kits)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what special support is being provided for the contract between Peugeot Talbot Motor Company and Iran for the sale of car kits.

Mr. Channon: For many years the Export Credits Guarantee Department has been insuring sales to Iran under this contract which is vital to the operation of the Peugeot Talbot plant in Coventry. Exceptionally ECGD has provided cover in advance of the issue of irrevocable letters of credit. My right hon. and learned Friend has decided that ECGD should continue such cover for a further period and for a limited amount to enable the contractors to renegotiate the terms with their buyers in such a way as to speed up the flow of letters of credit.

Anti-piracy

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received from the United States trade authorities a copy of the Singapore draft law on anti-piracy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: We are aware that the Singapore authorities have drafted legislation and we have asked them for a copy because we would wish to make them aware of our views. Any discussions with the United States authorities on this issue are a confidential matter.

Copyright

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will announce his response to the representations from the Talking Newspaper Association to the Green Paper on the recording and rental of audio and video copyright material.

Mr. Butcher: We hope to publish soon a White Paper setting out our proposals for reform in the whole field of copyright law, taking account of the representations that we have received from the Talking Newspaper Association.

Indonesia

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the volume and value of goods entering into trade between the United Kingdom and Indonesia during the years 1982 to 1984, inclusive, and the first half of 1985.

Mr. Channon: Volume trade figures for individual countries are not available. The value of goods traded

between the United Kingdom and Indonesia during the years 1982 to 1984, and the first half of 1985, is as follows.

United Kingdom trade with Indonesia

£ thousand

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
Exports	212,063	193,629	186,732	70,830
Imports	90,699	169,437	181,459	72,071

* January–June

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has now received British Shipbuilders' corporate plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders submitted its plan in late July. I am placing in the Library a version with commercially confidential information deleted. As last year, the Government accept the broad thrust of the proposed strategy, which is to continue to concentrate resources on a stable cost-effective mainstream merchant shipbuilding business. The pursuit of this strategy in 1984-85 enabled the corporation to reduce its trading loss on activities administered by BS during the year to £25 million and to achieve its new order target for merchant ships of some 200,000 compensated gross tonnes.

The corporation accepts the importance of continuing to improve its performance in the marketplace which will determine its ability to win new orders and to operate effectively within the framework of tight and degressive levels of Government financial support. Within that framework, British Shipbuilders' original forecast contained in the plan was that its level of new orders this financial year would be similar to last year's. But conditions in the shipbuilding market have recently deteriorated and British Shipbuilders now believes that it is unlikely to be able to win this level of orders. I have asked the corporation to keep the situation under review.

British Shipbuilders is continuing to privatise the warship building yards with the aim of completing all the sales by 31 March 1986.

PRIME MINISTER

Geological Surveying

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply, 19 July, *Official Report*, column *285*, when she expects to receive a copy of the report to be submitted to the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council and Advisory Board for the Research Councils about geological surveying in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I understand that the chairmen of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) expect the study group to submit its report to them about nine months after it starts work. Thereafter it will be for the ABRC and the NERC to decide what action to take on the report's recommendations; if they see fit to make a submission to the Government it would be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I have placed in the Library a copy of the NECR's press notice of 17 October which gives the study group's membership and terms of reference.

Pharmaceutical Patents

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Social Security on the problems of pharmaceutical patents arising out of the Patents Act 1977; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that there has been full consultation between the two departments on the questions raised by the pharmaceutical industry in connection with the Patents Act 1977. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has offered to meet representatives of the industry to discuss the matters which concern them.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister (1) what has been the total cost for Chequers in each of the past six years;

(2) how much has been spent on 10 Downing street in each of the past six years in respect of *(a)* total running costs, *(b)* staffing, *(c)* repairs and maintenance, *(d)* decoration, *(e)* furniture and *(f)* rates.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to the Lord Privy Seal's reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *11*]: It is not possible without disproportionate expense to allocate costs between 10 Downing street and Chequers or to provide the historical analysis of costs other than for staff.

The total costs to public funds of the Prime Minister's Office, including Chequers, in the last six years are:

*Cost at outturn prices**

Year (April to March)	*£*
1979-80	1,409,101
1980-81	1,744,824
1981-82†	2,415,301
1982-83	2,699,752
1983-84‡	3,026,042
1984-85	3,648,073

*Includes grant-in-aid to the Chequers trust, salaries and wages, pension liability and administration costs, but excludes the salary of the Prime Minister, messengerial and cleaning services, and any allowance for accommodation until 1983-84 when the property repayment scheme was introduced.

‡Following the abolition of the CPRS, the policy unit in the Prime Minister"s Office was strengthened by four staff. In the last full year of its existence (1982-83) CPRS employed 35 people and cost £1,109,000. Thus, while the cost of the Prime Minister's Office increased as a result of the abolition of the CPRS, substantial net overall savings were made.

†The increase in cost between 1980-81 and 1981-82 reflects the change in the basis of charging by MOD for aircraft used by the Prime Minister, and the introduction of repayment for the Service staff at Chequers, previously provided as an allied service.

The annual costs of staffing 10 Downing street in the last six years are:

*Cost at outturn prices**

Year (April to March)	£
1979-80	760,814
1980-81	901,608
1981-82	1,015,095
1982-83	1,042,817
1983-84	1,146,674
1984-85	1,355,173

*Includes salaries, wages, and notional superannuation costs.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister how much has been spent by her office on foreign travel in each of the past six years.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to the Lord Privy Seal's reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *11*]: The expenditure by my office on foreign travel in each of the last six years was:

*Cost at outturn prices**

Year†	£
1979-80	154,453
1980-81‡	141,824
1981-82	557,634
1982-83	538,877
1983-84	228,934
1984-85	434,006

* Because of billing delays the above figures do not necessarily reflect the costs of travel undertaken during the year against which they are shown.

† April to March.

‡ The increase in cost between 1980-81 and 1981-82 reflects the change in the basis of charging by MOD for aircraft used by the Prime Minister.

WALES

Local Government Act 1966

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what payments have been made under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to local authorities in Wales during the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, and for what specific purposes these grants were paid.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Responsibility for approval and payment of grants under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 lies with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. In 1984-85 the Home Office made provisional payments of £57,657·75p in respect of 1983-84 and £99,281 in respect of 1984-85 towards the establishment of 28 posts in South Glamorgan county council — (16 English second language teachers, 1 community tutor, 3 part-time adult instructors, 3 social workers, 2 social worker assistants, 1 clerk/typist, 1 ethnic minority librarian, 1 senior administrative assistant.) A further three posts (2 senior personal assistants and 1 higher clerical assistant) were approved in July 1985. Approval was also given to Cardiff city council in May 1985 for the appointment of a race and housing advisor, and a clerk/typist. No grant has been paid to date towards these appointments.

Parrot Corporation

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether, pursuant to his announcement of an internal investigation into the Welsh Development Agency's handling of its investment in the Parrot Corporation, he is yet in a position to give further details of that investigation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The investigation will be carried out by Mr. Douglas Baker, chairman of Touche Ross & Co. Mr. Baker's terms of reference are:

"to examine the Welsh Development Agency's handling of its investment in the Parrot Corporation and the Agency's supervision of its investment having special regard to the provisions of the WDA Act 1975, the investment guidelines laid down by the Welsh Office and the WDA's own investment manual; and to report to the Secretary of State".

The investigation will begin immediately and I will report further to the House in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Secretarial and Research Allowances

27. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Lord Privy Seal what recent representations he has received about secretarial and research allowances; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Lord Privy Seal what recent representations he has received about secretarial and research allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have answered a number of parliamentary questions and have discussed the matter with an all-party delegation.

Research Assistants

30. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Lord Privy Seal what recent change has been recorded in the number of research assistants employed in the House.

Mr. Biffen: Since 1 May the number of photo-identity passes on issue to Members' research assistants has fallen from 469 to 466.

Early-day Motions

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Lord Privy Seal what recent change has been recorded in the numbers of early-day motions tabled.

Mr. Biffen: The numbers of early-day motions tabled over the last five Sessions have been as follows:

	Numbers
1980-81	631
1981-82	716
*1982-83	502
†1983-84	1,058
1984-85	‡934

* Short session.

† Long session.

‡ Up to summer recess.

Positive Vetting

Mr. Bermingham asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed as representing the House of Commons Commission how many of the officers and staff of the House have been positively vetted; and if he will state the number vetted in each grade of employment.

Mr. Beith: No officers or staff of the House have been positively vetted for the purposes of their employment in the service of the House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Lord Privy Seal if any of the privileges of membership of the Lobby are dependent on the journalists concerned of *(a)* the broadcasting media or *(b)* the press having been positively vetted.

Mr. Biffen: No.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the most recent discussions which have taken place with the United States of America in relation to present and future funding of the international fund for agricultural development.

Mr. Raison: The United States took part in the last formal discussion in IFAD on funding the organisation which took place from 16 to 18 May. No agreement was then reached on the second replenishment. We are, of course, in regular touch with the United States on this problem.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government propose regarding the special programme of aid for sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: I have nothing to add to the answer given on 24 June at column *273* to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas).

THE ARTS

Publishers (Aid)

Mr. Freud asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the overall levels of support from the Arts Council to publishers and *(b)* the amounts given to each grant-aided publisher in each of the last three years and the projected grants for the forthcoming year; and what is the percentage change in each case.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Merseyside

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister for the Arts if he will outline the provision for the funding of the arts in the county of Merseyside from 1 April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Complaints Procedures

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the proposal for an independent body to investigate complaints by serving civil servants about alleged politicisation of the Civil Service put forward by Sir Douglas Wass.

Mr. Luce: Sir Douglas Wass's article does not appear to make a proposal along the lines suggested by the hon. Member.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

South Africa

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will detail, for each year since the inception of the EEC code of conduct for European firms operating in South Africa, how many companies in which the Church has investments were shown by the returns to the Department of Trade and Industry not to have fully complied with the code; and what action was taken.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Detailed information is not available for the whole eight-year period. In the last three years all United Kingdom companies have satisfied the commissioners either that they have complied with the code, or are making progress in that direction; although in four cases correspondence is continuing.

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many companies in which the Church has investments have been approached by the commissioners in each year since the inception of the EEC code of conduct for European firms operating in South Africa in respect of their returns to the Department of Trade and Industry on non-compliance with the code.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Detailed information is not available for the whole eight-year period, but since 1983 the following initial approaches have been made to companies:

1983: 14
1984: 21
1985: 12 (to date)

In many cases, these initial inquiries have led to subsequent correspondence or discussion with company management.

Investment Policy

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will name the persons on the commission staff who have the responsibility of monitoring the Church's portfolio to ensure that companies abide by the EEC code of conduct.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The responsibility for this matter, as with all matters relating to the commissioners' business, rests with their secretary, Mr. J. E. Shelley.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Contraception

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in the light of the House of Lords judgment on the Gillick case, he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the prescribing by doctors in Northern Ireland of contraceptive devices or drugs to girls below the age of consent.

Mr. Needham: In its 1975 memorandum of guidance on family planning services the Department of Health and

Social Services advised that, in the case of young persons, consideration be given to the desirability of seeking parental consent to any proposed contraceptive treatment having regard to the Age of Majority Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. This advice is still in effect and there are no plans at present to change it. It is, however, intended to review all the advice on contraception issued in Northern Ireland taking account of the House of Lords' judgment and the views expressed on this matter.

Security Forces (Co-operation)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether, in the light of the recent statement of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, that the Gardai in the Republic of Ireland had had to reduce its resources for the penetration and monitoring of terrorist groups, he remains satisfied with the co-operation between the security forces of the Irish Republic and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the apprehension and conviction of members of the Irish Republican Army and the Irish National Liberation Army; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the recent statement by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on security accurately represents *(a)* Her Majesty's Government's policy towards cross-border co-operation between the British and Irish security forces and *(b)* Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the effectiveness of that co-operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985, c. 282]: It is now clear that the Chief Constable's recent lecture to a gathering of professional police officers in the United States on the subject of border terrorism in an international context was seriously misrepresented in the media. While the Chief Constable expressed concern at the scale of resources available to the Gardai, he paid tribute to the Gardai, saying specifically that it was an excellent force of fine men; that the Royal Ulster Costabulary and the Gardai had a good relationship along the border at working level; and that there was no lack of will by the Gardai to combat terrorism. It is regrettable that an unreliable report should have led to so much unnecessary controversy.

We appreciate the co-operation which already takes place between the security forces on both sides of the border, and the Government intend to take every opportunity to improve it still further.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sugar Beet

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the acreages used for the growing of sugar beet within the European Economic Community for each of the last 10 years and the tonnage of sugar produced for the same periods.

Mr. Jopling: The information available is as follows:

Year (October—September)	*Area of sugar beet in the European Community ('000 Hectares)*	*Beet sugar production in the European Community ('000 tonnes white sugar)**
1975-76	1,887	9,656
1976-77	1,916	10,009
1977-78	1,803	11,472
1978-79	1,796	11,721
1979-80	1,800	12,230
1980-81	1,805	11,978
1981-82	2,026	14,711
1982-83	1,839	13,633
1983-84	1,663	10,740
1984-85†	1,733	12,211

Source: EC Commission.

* Includes non-quota sugar production which must be exported outside the EC without export refunds or carried forward to count towards the following year's quota production.

† Provisional.

University Funding

Mr. Chapman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the effect on university funding of his expressed hope that the reductions in the agricultural research budget in each of the next two years will be replaced by funds from industry and private research funding bodies; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I have received no such representations.

Agricultural Research

Mr. Chapman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the reduction in the agricultural research Vote of £10 million for 1986-87 and £20 million for 1987-88 he estimates will be replaced by industry and private research funding bodies, respectively.

Mr. Jopling: Consultations are in progress with all sectors on the arrangements by which the industry might contribute to the future funding of research and development from which it benefits. At this stage it is not possible to indicate what the proportion of funds coming from different sources will be.

Severe Weather Aid

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to respond, in a practical manner, to the representations which have been made to him by the National Farmers Union for financial aid to the farming industry in the light of the winter weather crisis in certain areas of Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on Thursday 24 October 1985, at column *258*, to the hon.

Top Management Information Systems

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now able to make available the 1985 returns of his top management information systems.

Mr. Jopling: I am pleased to say that a copy of the 1985 MINIM returns, which cover the objectives and resources used by the Ministry's programmes, has today been placed in the Library of the House.

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

12. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average increase in *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial electricity prices over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Electricity tariffs increased on 1 April 1985 by an average of 4·3 and 4·9 per cent. for domestic and industrial consumers, respectively. For four years electricity prices have risen less than the rate of inflation.

"New Community Energy Objectives"

13. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what response he has made to the European Commission document COM(85)245 entitled "New Community Energy Objectives."

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State welcomed the Commission's draft paper at the Energy Council on 20 June, but emphasised the need for further careful consideration.

British Gas Corporation

14. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Gas Consumers Council, he will discuss with her the proposed privatisation of the British Gas Corporation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I meet the chairman of the National Gas Consumers Council from time to time and discuss with her matters of current interest.

Coal Industry

15. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss the future of the coal industry.

17. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the National Coal Board; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board frequently to discuss all aspects of the industry, including future strategy.

Energy Conservation Year

16. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff in the energy efficiency office are employed directly on preparations for Energy Conservation Year in 1986.

Mr. Peter Walker: The entire staff of the energy efficiency office will, of course, be involved in Energy Efficiency Year 1986. However, within the office a special team has been created to ensure that planning of the year is co-ordinated and that information about events and initiatives in the year is properly disseminated. In addition, the team is supported by regional energy efficiency officers.

Nuclear Power Stations

18. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, he will raise with him the building of further nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB has stated that it does not intend to make any application for new power stations (nuclear or otherwise) until the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry is known.

National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

19. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the achievements to date of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

21. **Mrs Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. in providing alternative jobs in mining areas affected by pit closures.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes).

Anti-Nuclear Campaign

20. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to counteract the anti-nuclear campaign related to energy from nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: Ministers have frequently indicated the importance we attach to the safe and economic development of nuclear power; and will continue to do so.

Heating Systems

22. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans or financial incentives he has to encourage the changeover from district heating systems to individual heating systems.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to encourage changing from district heating to individual heating systems.

Offshore Oil and Gas Construction Industry

23. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what action he proposes to take to stimulate the growth and export potential of the offshore oil and gas construction industry.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Since 1980 the United Kingdom offshore oil and gas construction industry has won an average 82 per cent. share of a domestic market now worth nearly £650 million a year. This year I have approved 16 new oil and gas projects, and there has been a record response from the oil and gas companies in the ninth round of licensing.

Redundant Mineworkers

24. **Mr. Mason** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he is giving to assist those mineworkers who are being declared redundant, yet, because they have not paid their national insurance

contributions for 12 months, are likely to lose unemployment benefits and entitlements from the redundant mineworkers' pension scheme; if he will liaise with the National Coal Board to find a solution to this problem; whether he will consider introducing a buy-back benefits scheme; and if he will make a statement.

25. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to introduce amendments to the mineworkers' redundancy payment scheme to cover payments to miners who are made redundant in 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: I am considering whether changes to the present legislation governing the redundant mineworkers payments scheme would be appropriate given the failure of some mineworkers to pay sufficient national insurance contributions during the strike to qualify for unemployment benefit during benefit year 1986.

Gas and Electricity (Standing Charges)

Mr. Eric Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the revenues of the gas and electricity industries, respectively, is derived from standing charges on domestic consumers.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is estimated that in 1984-85 standing charges represented about 9 per cent. of the total revenue of the British Gas Corporation and about 6 per cent. of the total revenue of the electricity supply industry.

NCB Works, Tredomen

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received or is aware of any proposals for new investment in, or further development of, the National Coal Board engineering works at Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach.

Mr. David Hunt: Tredomen Engineering Ltd. is a company owned by the NCB's wholly owned subsidiary NCB (Ancillaries). The NCB tells me that since 1982, some £700,000 has been invested in modern production facilities at Tredomen, including robotic welding equipment and computer controlled machine tools. It is for the board or its subsidiaries to decide on further investment.

Polkemmet Colliery

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the results of his study of the West Lothian district council evidence to the Cooper committee on the non-recovery of Polkemmet colliery.

Mr. David Hunt: I wrote to the hon. Member on 31 July about the evidence submitted by West Lothian district council. The council subequently sent my right hon. Friend a copy of the inquiry's report and he wrote to it on 16 September.

Decisions on the future of individual pits are central to the management of the coal industry and must be for the National Coal Board in consultation with the unions. The unions have the opportunity to appeal against the proposed closure of Polkemmet through the colliery review procedure.

TRANSPORT

Speed Limits

26. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make temporary speed limits on motorways mandatory.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to make the temporary advisory speed limits on motorways mandatory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: No. There is no evidence that mandatory speed limits are any more effective than temporary advisory speed limits even where these are used in circumstances where the need for reduced speeds is immediately apparent. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has written to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins).

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is intending to issue new guidelines regarding speed and driving attitudes to users of the fast lane on motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: Full guidance already exists in the highway code and the Department's manual "Driving"; it is regularly supported by widespread publicity. The messages are simple: "keep to the speed limits; use the correct lane; keep your distance". Drivers are advised that the third lane is for overtaking only and should be referred to as the overtaking lane and not by any other name.

Freight Charges

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available about him to the relative cost of transporting one tonne of freight by road and rail in (i) 1966, and (ii) 1983, expressed as user expenditure per tonne at 1983 prices.

Mrs. Chalker: The only available estimates are for total users' expenditure on road and rail freight and for tonnes moved by each mode. The table shows estimated average costs per tonne and per tonne-kilometre at 1983 prices, but such simple expenditure comparisons between road and rail give a misleading picture of the comparable costs of the two modes because of the different types of freight covered and services provided. Rail freight consists mainly of bulk commodities: full train loads accounting for over 90 per cent. of tonnage in 1983. By comparison road freight is largely concerned with individual loads often of several different commodities for several destinations—bulk commodities accounting for only 30 per cent. of tonnage in 1983.

Comparisons between 1966 and 1983 are also effected by changes in the rail freight operation. In 1966 about 70 per cent. of freight was wagon-load traffic, by 1983 it had fallen to less than 10 per cent. The figures include the effects of taxes and grants.

Estimates of expenditure on road and rail freight: United Kingdom

	Users' Expenditure at 1983 prices (£m)	*Tonnes carried (m)*	*Tonne-kms (bn)*	*Users expenditure per tonne (£)*	*per tonne-km (pence)*
Road 1966	*15,900	1,680	75	*9·5	21·2
1983	19,200	1,440	103	13·3	18·6
Rail 1966	*1,590	220	25	*7·2	6·4
1983	645	150	17	4·3	3·8

* Inflated using implicit GDP estimates of inflation.
Note: All freight figures include parcels traffic.

Road Planning

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport when contracts will be placed for the M1-A1 link road and when such work is likely to be started.

Mrs. Chalker: Placing contracts for the scheme depends on the outcome of the nine-month public inquiries which ended in June. The Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport will announce their decision as soon as possible after receiving the inspector's report, which is expected to be submitted in the first half of 1986. On present programmes, work could start during 1987.

Local Authority Associations (Consultations)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the ground rules circulated within his Department to ensure adequate consultation with the local authority associations in the light of the judgment in R *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Roads

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the amount spent by Staffordshire county council in each of the last 12 years on *(a)* maintenance and repair of roads and *(b)* new road building, expressed at constant prices.

Mrs. Chalker: I could only provide the answer at disproportionate cost. My Department does not hold such collated information for individual local authorities. However, expenditure on maintenance (including lighting) and capital (mostly roads) accepted for transport supplementary grant for Staffordshire county council since 1975-76 at constant prices is:

£ million

	Maintenance	*Capital*
1975-76	17·8	27·6
1976-77	17·6	33·1
1977-78	17·6	23·4
1978-79	18·5	12·6
1979-80	18·5	12·9
1980-81	18·1	10·0
1981-82	16·8	8·6
1982-83	16·3	7·8
1983-84	16·1	9·1
1984-85	16·8	8·7
1985-86	*	*

* Not available at constant prices.

Road Humps

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of his Department as to the introduction of road humps and if he will list his powers to agree to such schemes.

Mrs. Chalker: Road humps are one of a number of measures available to highway authorities for moderating the speed of traffic. Provisions allowing their installation were inserted into the Highways Act 1980 by schedule 10 of the Transport Act 1981. Regulations governing the form and siting of road humps are:

— The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1983 SI 1087
— The Traffic Signs General (Amendment) Directions 1983 SI 1086
— The Traffic Signs (Amendment) Regulations 1983 SI 1088.

The Department will shortly be consulting on revised proposals for amendments to these regulations to introduce greater flexibility.

M40

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress being made towards the construction of the M40 extension.

Mrs. Chalker: Work on the Warwick to Wendlebury section of the M40, a substantial part of which is subject to proceedings in the Appeal Court, has been suspended pending the outcome of these proceedings. A draft side roads order for the section between Warwick and M42 at Umberslade, which is not affected by the Appeal Court hearing, was published last March and a draft compulsory purchase order for this stretch is being published on 25 October, with the closing date for objections of 15 November.

The Appeal Court hearing is due to be held on 21 November. Depending on the outcome, arrangements will then be made for a public inquiry into objections to the published orders on the Warwick to Umberslade section, and preparation work on the Warwick to Wendlebury section will resume with a view to publishing the necessary side roads orders and CPOs as soon as possible.

It is hoped to make a further announcement on the remaining section of the M40 between Wendlebury and Waterstock shortly.

Subject to the legal proceedings, and to the subsequent satisfactory progress of the outstanding statutory procedures, work on building the M40 extension could start by around the middle of 1987.

A303 Roadworks

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the estimated cost for the

proposed *(a)* grade-separated junction and *(b)* temporary splash island on the A303 cross roads at Stoke Sub Hamdon and Martock.

Mrs. Chalker: The proposed road widening incorporating a ghost island would cost about £50,000. It is difficult to isolate the cost of a grade separated junction from the associated costs of improving the present main road to dual carriageway standard, which we are planning as part of a major reconstruction of this stretch of the A303, but the junction and slip roads are likely to account for at least £1 million in this proposed £9 million scheme.

Transport Staff (Assaults)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information and statistics he collects from public transport operators as to the incidence of assaults on members of their staff in the course of their duty and on any subsequent criminal proceedings taken against the alleged assailants.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Bus and Coach Council keeps records relating to bus operators outside London and London Regional Transport does the same for its operations, and have made them available to my Department. The British Railways Board provides me with information on the number of assaults on its employees and individual cases on request.

M6 (Congestion)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the need to widen the M6 between junctions 30 and 31 in order to avoid congestion.

Mrs. Chalker: I have engaged consultants to study present conditions on this stretch of the M6 and to consider the likely traffic needs now and up to the turn of the century. I expect to receive their report shortly and to announce my decision on what improvement measures need to be taken early next year.

Road Accidents (Fire Hazards)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the inquiry into the recent accident on the M6 will look into ways of reducing fire hazards in road accidents.

Mrs. Chalker: As I have assured the House, when all the evidence is available I shall be looking at every aspect of the accident on the M6 on 21 October to see what lessons may be learnt for the future. We are already looking into the general subject of fire risk in road accidents and, in the case of coaches, we are seeking advice from the fire research station on our proposals that new coaches should meet specified standards for fire retardant material.

Veterinary Services

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to amend existing regulations to permit animal ambulances or veterinary surgeons attending the scenes of accidents to use emergency flashing lights; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no plans to do so. I shall be sending my hon. Friend very shortly a full reply to his recent letter.

Domestic Air Routes (Competition)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the conditions prevailing on domestic air routes are such as to make competition possible with those airlines currently serving them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I will answer this question shortly.

Drivers' Hours

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for the chairman of the Council of Transport Ministers' meeting on 14 November to strike the drivers' hours regulations from the agenda.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will print a list of accident rates per mile of long distance heavy goods vehicle drivers for the five years prior to 1968 and the most recent five-year period for which figures are available, including the total number of accidents in each case, and showing such information as he has as to what proportion were caused by driver error.

Mr. Ridley: I will answer this question shortly.

Air Lanka

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his policy with regard to Air Lanka flying between Manchester international airport and Colombo;

(2) what is his policy with regard to determining the number of seats which Air Lanka is allowed to fill on its aircraft flying between the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka; and if he will agree to an increase in this number;

(3) if he will make a statement about the forthcoming talks between his Department and the Sri Lankan aviation authorities;

(4) if representatives of British Airways will be present at the forthcoming talks between his Department and the Sri Lankan aviation authorities; whether representatives of other British airlines will be present at these talks; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will undertake to place in the Library an account of the forthcoming talks between his Department and the Sri Lankan aviation authorities as soon as those discussions have been completed.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the prospects of Air Lanka flying direct between Manchester and Colombo.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Sri Lankan authorities have asked for consultations about services on the route between the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka. The British delegation therefore will include representatives of British Airways as the designated British airline.

We shall consider any Sri Lankan proposals for changes in the present arrangements in accordance with the policy set out in two White Papers — "Airline Competition policy" (Cmnd. 9366) and "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542) — recently presented to Parliament by my right

hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The discussions themselves will, of course, be confidential. I will, however, place in the Library a copy of any public statement which may be agreed between the delegations and of any statement which I may make about the results of the discussions. I can say that traffic between Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom fell sharply between the years ending 31 March 1984 and 1985 and that this decline is continuing.

Platinum (Price)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will assess the impact of changes in the price of platinum upon the economics of catalytic converters designed for the removal of hydrocarbons and NOx from vehicle exhausts.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the cost of the platinum group metals that would be used in a three-way catalyst on a typical European mid-sized car is around £25 at current prices. Thus a doubling in the price of these metals would add about £25 to the cost of each catalyst.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of the feasibility studies on the future of BREL which have been submitted to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The BR chairman is keeping us informed of progress on his review of options for the future of British Rail Engineering Ltd. but no feasibility studies on this subject have been submitted to my right hon. Friend.

Scotland

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the feasibility study on the future of Scotrail which has been submitted to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No feasibility study on the future of Scotrail has been submitted to my right hon. Friend.

Channel Link

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the criteria by which he intends to judge submissions on the Channel fixed link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The proposals by promoters of a Channel fixed link, which my right hon. Friend must receive by 31 October, will be assessed in accordance with the invitation to promoters issued by the British and French Governments on 2 April, a copy of which was placed in the Library.

Tachographs

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many visits have been made by representatives of the traffic commissioners or his Department to local long-distance coach operators to check bus tachographs; and what action has been subsequently taken.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 October 1985, c. 272]: Separate figures are not kept for checks on tachograph charts for drivers of vehicles operated by local long distance coach operators. My Department's traffic examiners make regular visits to all bus operators to check vehicle and driver records including tachograph charts. Passenger vehicle and driver records are also checked at the roadside and at the ferry ports. In 1984 some 20,747 charts were checked for drivers of passenger vehicles from which 2,224 (10·7 per cent.) offences were reported for further action.

EMPLOYMENT

Unmarried Mothers

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) how many unmarried mothers are classified as unemployed; how many unmarried mothers are registered at job centres; and what these figures represent as a percentage of the total of unmarried mothers;

(2) how many unmarried mothers are in receipt of unemployment benefit; how many are in receipt of supplementary benefit; and what these figures represent as a percentage of the total number of unmarried mothers.

Mr. Alan Clark: According to the labour force survey, in Great Britain in the spring of 1984, there were about 190,000 women who were single, widowed, divorced or separated with dependent children aged under 16 who said they were claiming benefits and therefore included in the unemployment count. This represents about 11·5 per cent. of all such women. Corresponding figures are not available for those registered at jobcentres. About 65,000 of these women—about 4 per cent.—were claiming unemployment benefit while some 120,000—about 7 per cent.—were claiming supplementary benefit only.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on progress being made towards the implementation of a two-year youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Following consultations with interested parties, the Manpower Services Commission has recently finalised and published details of the main funding and administrative arrangements for the two-year youth training scheme, including transitional provision for ex-mode B1 schemes. During the next few months guidance about the design and content and other aspects of two-year training courses will be issued; and staff in the Manpower Services Commission's area offices will be discussing with potential training providers how they might be involved in the two-year scheme.

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the proposed funding arrangements for youth training schemes which hitherto have been designated as mode B training schemes.

Mr. Trippier: Under the new two-year youth training scheme, existing mode B1 providers will generally be eligible for the premium rate of funding and so receive £270 per trainee per month, in addition to the managing agent's fee. The provider will continue to get this higher level of funding for as long as the young person remains on his scheme, including those periods when the young person is receiving work experience on an employer's premises. Many current mode B1 providers will also receive transitional funding for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Jobclubs

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on jobclubs, with particular reference to their funding and terms of reference.

Mr. Alan Clark: The purpose of jobclubs is to coach groups of long-term unemployed people in job finding techniques, provide them with facilities for intensive job hunting, and motivate and support them in looking for work.

The Manpower Services Commission is currently operating 29 jobclubs and I have asked it to expand rapidly, should evaluation confirm the very encouraging results so far, to around 200 by the end of 1986.

Jobclubs are being funded out of existing MSC resources. The majority of jobclubs are housed in jobcentres, and all are run by jobcentre staff.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if he will give a breakdown by age and sex of the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the available analysis of those unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over one year as at 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available.

Long term unemployment—United Kingdom—11 July 1985—Age analysis

	Male	*Female*
Under 17 years	0	0
17 years	6,179	4,240
18 years	22,375	15,059
19 years	33,154	20,963
20-24 years	175,660	73,219
25-29 years	138,250	35,980
30-34 years	116,768	21,492
35-39 years	108,025	17,865
40-44 years	87,065	19,305
45-49 years	84,357	25,337
50-54 years	95,368	32,609
55-59 years	132,639	43,289
60 and over	16,632	1,054

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many persons who have been made redundant are included in the latest unemployment figures; and what criteria are used to determine which redundant persons are included.

Mr. Alan Clark: Separate figures for those made redundant are not available. But according to the labour force survey, in Great Britain in the spring of 1984, about 26 per cent. of the claimant unemployed had had a job within the previous three years and had left their last job because of redundancy or dismissal.

All people made redundant and making claims at unemployment benefit offices are included in the unemployment count while they are signing on, although the payments received may affect their entitlement to unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General why persons in receipt of paid holiday are included in the unemployment figures for the weeks in which they are in receipt of holiday pay; and how many such persons were included in the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: There should be no such persons in receipt of holiday pay included in the monthly unemployment figures.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many employed persons who were also classified as sick were included in the latest unemployment figures; how many sick, self-employed persons were included; and in each case, why.

Mr. Alan Clark: According to results of the 1984 labour force survey, there were about 15,000 people who said they were claiming benefits and had a job but were away from it for at last part of the reference week because of sickness or injury.

The number of self-employed people in this category was insignificant. Some people with jobs—for example, those with low paid part-time jobs—may legitimately claim benefit and some may sign on but later have their claim disallowed

The survey results may also be subject to some respondent errors.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the definition of unemployment used in compiling the monthly unemployment figures;

(2) if he will list *(a)* all the separate categories of persons who are included in the unemployment figures and *(b)* all the various claim forms which, if completed, result in a person being included in the unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: The monthly unemployment count relates to all unemployed people signing on at unemployment benefit offices to claim unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit or national insurance credits.

The main claim forms which result in a person being included in the unemployment figures are the initial claim form (UB461) and the fortnightly declaration of unemployment (UB 25). In addition, the following forms are used in particular circumstances:

Claim Form	*Purpose*
UB 20	Weekly claiming
UB88 (Qtrly)	Quarterly claiming
PF	Postal claiming book
PQF	Postal claiming book
PQW	Postal claiming book
UB 88P	Weekly postal claiming
UB 88P(AE)	Part-time worker postal Claiming.
UB 20(SF)	Share fishermen's claims
UB 118 (AE)	Share fishermen's claims with other part-time work
UB 90	Seeking work away from home
UB 88X	Confirmation of past unemployment
UB 26T/V	Fortnightly claiming with weekly cheques by personal issue.
UB 591	Delayed claim for benefit
CR2	Weekly application for NI credits
CR 2 (Quarterly)	Quarterly application for NI credits
CR 5	Postal application for NI credits
UB 40 (Part 2)	Signing-on card
UB 43	Final days of claim
UB44	Failed to sign cases
UB 71	Final claim by a personal issue
CR 4	Final days-NI credits only
UB25(AE)	Part-time worker

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Liverpool.

Mr. Alan Clark: The level of unemployment in Liverpool is too high. That is why there is an extensive range of Government assistance to attract new investment and therefore new jobs. The area will also benefit from the expansion of three of our special employment and training measures — the youth training scheme, the community programme and the enterprise allowance scheme. But the creation of jobs in Liverpool and elsewhere depends primarily on the efforts of entrepreneurs and the competitiveness of industry.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General how many of those who left school in 1985 in the Leeds travel-to-work area were in full-time employment on the latest available figures; and what is that figure as a percentage of school leavers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information from the Leeds careers service indicates that of 6,802 young people who left school this year in the Leeds travel-to-work area 1,832, or 26·9 per cent., went into employment. In addition, 2,783, some of whom will be employees, entered the youth training scheme.

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General what were the levels of unemployment for each month of 1985 in Peacehaven and Dorking.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants for the Lewes No. 9 ward which relates to Peacehaven, and the Dorking north-east, Dorking north-west, Dorking south-east, Dorking south-west and north Holmwood wards which relate to Dorking.

	Peacehaven	*Dorking*
January 1985	474	332
February 1985	478	333
March 1985	441	318
April 1985	454	318
May 1985	427	307
June 1985	429	289
July 1985	417	299
August 1985	437	305
September 1985	447	301

Disabled People

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many disabled persons were included in the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: According to the 1984 labour force survey, approximately 16 per cent. of claimants included in the unemployment count had health problems or disabilities that would limit the kind of work they could do.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Paymaster General what consideration is being given to the disabled with emphasis on the mentally ill and mentally handicapped within the Government's new provisions for the unemployed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Disabled people, including those who are mentally ill and mentally handicapped, benefit from the full range of employment and training services which are available to able-bodied people. This applies to both new and existing provision. In many of these programmes, relaxed eligibility conditions are applicable to disabled participants.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Paymaster General if there are any plans for research into more effective ways of providing vocational rehabilitation services for the disabled.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Manpower Services Commission administers an employment rehabilitation programme for disabled people. There is a continuous programme of evaluating existing practices and developing new initiatives to improve the effectiveness of the service.

Community Programme

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest progress towards increasing the number of places on the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The community programme is being expanded by 100,000 places to 230,000 filled places by the end of May 1986 with an interim target for December 1985 of 180,000 filled places. We are making good progress towards meeting these targets. The latest available figures show that 185,700 places have now been authorised, of which 150,930 are filled.

EC (Harmonisation Measures)

Mr. Marlow asked the Paymaster General if he will list those European Economic Community harmonisation measures coming into effect over the last 12 months which have *(a)* reduced the paperwork demands on business and *(b)* increased the paperwork demands on business.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I cannot give precise information broken down in this way. However, it is important that EEC measures should not run counter to our domestic deregulation policy. The Government, therefore, want to see the EEC introduce arrangements to ensure systematic scrutiny of existing and proposed community legislation for its impact on business. In response to an initiative launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the March European Council, the Commission is studying the problem and is due to report back to the December Council.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Paymaster General what vocational provisions are being made for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped following the Goverment's programme of closing down large institutions and establishing community services for these groups.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A flexible range of assistance is available through the Manpower Services Commission to all disabled people, including the mentally ill and mentally handicapped. Eligibility for particular types of assistande depends on the circumstances of the individual. No programmes have been developed specifically to meet the closure of particular institutions, but local resettlement services, availabie through jobcentres, seek to help to meet local needs.

Employment rehabilitation centres and Asset (assistance towards employment) teams provide rehabilitation for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. Further work is in hand to improve such provision for this group. An increasing number of places are becoming available under the sheltered employment programme for those not able to work in open employment.

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the main findings of his Department's latest survey of the labour force and, in particular, on the number of those on the unemployment register who either had a job or were not seeking work during the period of the survey; and if he will indicate the criteria used in determining whether such persons should be included in the unemployment statistics.

Mr. Alan Clark: The 1984 labour force survey showed that there were about 740,000 claimants without a job but not actively seeking work in the survey week and therefore not classified as unemployed using the survey definition. There were a further 200,000 claimants not classed as unemployed because they said they had a paid job. The monthly unemployment count includes all those who make a claim at an unemployment benefit office for unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit or national insurance credits and sign on as available for work.

Students

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if students who are seeking work during the summer vacation are included in the unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: A separate count is made of students on vacation who intend to return to full-time education and are unemployed claimants. All other unemployment figures issued by my Department exclude such students.

Work Test Procedure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the operation and efficacy of the work test procedure.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployed people making a claim for benefit have their availability tested for work by a direct question on the unemployment benefit claim form, and subsequently whenever doubt arises about their availability for work. They are no longer required to register for work at a jobcentre but are encouraged to make full use of the services offered by the Manpower Services Commission

The initial availability test requires all claimants to declare whether or not they are willing to take any full-time job which they can do. A negative reply causes the unemployment benefit office to make further detailed inquiries about the nature and conditions of the work which an individual claimant is prepared to accept. Any doubts about the individual's availability are then referred to the independent adjudicating authorities. In 1983, the last full year for which figures are available, over 57,000 claims were disallowed on these grounds.

I am not fully satisfied with this availability test. I have recently set in hand arrangements to improve links between unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres and I am discussing with colleagues the possibility of strengthening the role played by the unemployment review officers of the DHSS.

Jobcentres

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many and what percentage of unemployed claimants in the London area are registered at a jobcentre; and how these figures compare with *(a)* the number of vacancies notified to his Department in Greater London and *(b)* the estimated overall number of vacancies in Greater London.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the numbers and the percentage of unemployed claimants registered at jobcentres in the Greater London area is not available. The total number of those registered at jobcentres in Greater London at 4 October 1985 was 29,711. Statistics of those registered at jobcentres do not distinguish unemployed claimants from people seeking a change of employment and others who are not claiming unemployment benefit. Information on the number and percentage of unemployed claimants registered at jobcentres is therefore not available.

On 6 September the numbers of notified vacancies in Greater London were 29,160 at jobcentres and 4,879 at careers offices. No estimate is available of the overall number of vacancies in Greater London. Nationally it is estimated that about one third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Unemployment Register

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General in what circumstances men over 60 years are required to sign the unemployment register.

Mr. Alan Clark: Men over 60 who are not working are required to sign on as unemployed if they wish to claim unemployment benefit.

Employment Transfer Scheme

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to seek to increase the effectiveness of the working of the employment transfer scheme as regards applicants from the north of England and Scotland seeking jobs in the south of England.

Mr. Alan Clark: The purpose of the employment transfer scheme is to help employers to fill vacancies which cannot be filled locally by encouraging and assisting unemployed people and those threatened with redundancy to move to take them when they would not otherwise have done so. The scheme is not intended to provide financial assistance to all unemployed people who move to jobs in other parts of the country. Offering such assistance where vacancies can be filled by local unemployed people would be a waste of taxpayers' money. We are piloting a revised approach in the south-west region which ties the scheme more closely to those vacancies which employers cannot fill locally. This new approach is simpler to administer than the existing employment transfer scheme and will enable unemployed people who are considering taking jobs in other areas to be told more quickly than is possible under the existing arrangements whether they are eligible for assistance. The Government will be reviewing the future of the scheme in the light of the results of the pilot scheme and other factors.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Local Government Act 1966

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been paid under section

11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to local authorities in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland, respectively, in the most recent year for which information is available.

Mr. Waddington: The total grant paid to local authorities in respect of the financial year 1983-84 is as follows:

(a) England: £73,050,470

(b) Wales: £57,658 (In 1983-84 all applications for grant under section 11 from Welsh local authorities were approved)

Section 11 does not apply to Scotland.

Certain payments are provisional subject to audit and final acceptance by the Home Office and the final figures may therefore be slightly different.

Prisoners (Accommodation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces outside the metropolitan area have held prisoners in police cells in 1985; and what are the age, sex and location of the prisoners concerned.

Mr. Mellor: Between 1 May and 18 October 1985 prisoners were held in police cells by provincial forces as follows:

	Adult males	*Under 21 males*	*Adult females*	*Under 21 females*
Bedfordshire	—	—	2	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	4	1
Dorset	—	—	1	—
Essex	54	3	2	1
Hampshire	—	—	11	—
Hertfordshire	23	20	2	—
Kent	1,256	776	3	1
Leicestershire	—	—	5	3
Norfolk	—	—	2	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	1	—
Suffolk	—	—	1	—
Surrey	11	2	2	—
Sussex	—	—	6	—
Thames Valley	—	—	74	6
Total	1,344	801	116	12

* The high level of occupancy of police cells in Kent was the result of an industrial dispute at Canterbury prison, which has now been resolved.

Further information is not available centrally.

For information about numbers between 1 January and 30 April I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question on 8 May at column *408*.

Pregnant Females (Youth Custody)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of pregnant girls entering youth custody centres in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: One hundred and thirty-six girls known to be pregnant are recorded as having been received in youth custody centres in 1984.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of girls who gave birth in 1984 and so far this year whilst in youth custody centres, giving their ages, sentence left to serve and offence.

Mr. Mellor: Sixteen females under 21 serving sentences in youth custody centres have given birth since 1 January 1984. One was 16 years old, seven were 17, one 18, two 19, two 20 and three 21.

One had two weeks left to serve, two one month, five six weeks, one two months, one two and a half months, two three months, two three and a half months, one four months and one seven months.

Five had been convicted of robbery, two for the possession of drugs, and one each for robbery and assault, robbery and burglary, burglary, burglary and theft, theft and deception, illegal importation of drugs, abduction, unlawful wounding and assault occasioning grievous bodily harm.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of females currently in youth custody centres who are pregnant.

Mr. Mellor: On 18 October 1985, the latest date for which information is available, 13 females in youth custody centres were known to be pregnant.

Mothers (Youth Custody)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of women currently in youth custody centres who are mothers; and what is the number of children they have.

Mr. Mellor: There are currently 42 mothers in youth custody centres with 55 children between them.

Women Prisoners

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of women in prison at the latest available date who had their children with them, giving their location, the ages of the children, the sentence being served by the mother and the offence.

Mr. Mellor: On 18 October 1985, the latest date for which this information is available, 23 women had their children with them in custody.

Six women were in Holloway, of whom one was awaiting trial for murder, one for the supply and one for the illegal importation of drugs. One was serving a 21-month sentence and one a three-year sentence for the illegal importation of drugs, and one a 27-month sentence for possession of drugs. Their children's ages ranged from seven days to 16 weeks.

Six women were in Styal, of whom one was serving a 12-month sentence for deception, one 15-month for burglary, one 21-month for breach of a suspended sentence and robbery, one two years for deception, one two years for burglary and one three years for abduction and assault. Their children's ages ranged from two months to 5½ months.

Eleven women were in Askham Grange. One was serving a seven-month sentence for theft and deception, three were serving nine months for burglary, attempted and criminal deception, and deception and wounding respectively, two were serving 12 months for the possession of drugs and forgery respectively, one was serving 15 months for theft, two were serving 18 months for burglary and receiving respectively, one was serving two years for customs evasion and one three years for the illegal importation of drugs. Their children's ages ranged from three weeks to 15½ months.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the number of women in prison who have children; what is the number of these children aged three years or less; and who is responsible for the children while the mother is in custody.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not kept centrally and reliable estimates could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the provision of facilities at youth custody centres for girls to have their children with them.

Mr. Mellor: The mother and baby unit at Styal is a designated youth custody centre. Female inmates sentenced to youth custody are also eligible to have their babies with them in the mother and baby units at Askham Grange and Holloway.

Births in Custody

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women gave birth in 1984 and so far in 1985 while on remand in custody awaiting trial or sentence; what was the offence with which each one was charged; what was the sentence; and what happened to the children.

Mr. Mellor: Twenty-two unsentenced women have given birth in custody since 1 January 1984.

Four were charged with illegal importation of drugs, four with theft, two each with murder, burglary, handling stolen goods and deception and one each with assault occasioning grievous bodily harm, robbery with violence, customs evasion, threatening words and behaviour, fraud, and arson.

Thirteen received custodial sentences—one of 126 days' youth custody, one of 15 months' youth custody, one of 12 months' imprisonment (of which eight were suspended) one of nine months, three of 12 months, three of 18 months, one of 21 months, one of two and one of three years. Four received non-custodial sentences, two were made subject to extradition orders, and three are at present on trial.

Of their children, 13 remained with their mothers in mother and baby units, three went to relations, three were placed in local authority care, one was fostered and two were extradited with their mothers.

Women in Custody

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of women in custody with their children in 1984 and so far in 1985 who were subsequently separated from their children, giving the age of the child, the disposal of the child and the reason for the separation.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1 January 1984, sixteen women who had their children in custody were subsequently separated from them. Seventeen babies were involved, one aged 24 hours, 10 aged several days, one each aged six weeks, four months, eight months and 10 months and two aged 15 months.

Seven babies were placed with friends or relations, and nine in various forms of care. One baby was separated because it needed hospital care, the mother remaining in custody. Of the other 15 mothers, 12 preferred separation, one mother was transferred to an establishment without a mother and baby unit for disciplinary reasons, one was separated from her baby because of the nature of her offence, and one mother was separated from one of her babies on psychiatric advice and subsequently placed a second in voluntary care.

Mother and Baby Units

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of children refused admission to each mother and baby unit in 1984 and so far in 1985, giving the reason for the refusal and the subsequent disposal of the child.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984 three babies were refused admission to the unit at Holloway, one because of the length of the mother's sentence and two because the unit was full. Two babies remained with their grandparents and one remained with a friend of the mother.

Up till 18 October 1985 two babies have been refused admission to the unit at Askham Grange, one because of its age, the other following advice from probation and social services departments. One remained with foster parents and the other with relatives. Two babies have been refused admission to the unit at Holloway because of lack of space. One remained with its father, the other with a friend of the mother.

There is no record of any baby being refused admission to the unit at Styal over this period.

Local Authority Associations (Consultations)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the ground rules circulated within his Department to ensure adequate consultation with the local authority associations in the light of the judgment in R. *v* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte in the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Mr. Mellor: No such grounds rules have been circulated. My right hon. Friend is considering, in the light of the judgment, whether any changes in the Department's procedures for consulting the local authority associations and other organisations are necessary.

Racial Violence (Prosecutions)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis regarding the policy of the police toward the initiation by them, rather than by the victim, of court proceedings where offences involving racial violence are alleged to have taken place.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Decisions on whether to prosecute in individual cases are for the chief officer of police, advised as appropriate by the Director of Public Prosecutions, but it is the normal policy of the police to prosecute in offences involving violence resulting in injury, unless there are special considerations. Violence for racial motives is viewed particularly seriously.

The Department is consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers and the commissioner about the circumstances in which the police, with the consent of the victim, initiate a prosecution for common assault to see whether any general guidance would be helpful.

Police Stations (Lay Visitors)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision on the request to set up a lay vistors' scheme to police stations in W Division of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend, as police authority for the Metropolitan police district, has considered and agreed to proposals put forward by the Wandsworth policing consultative committee for the establishment of a lay visitor scheme for police stations in W division. The necessary steps are being taken to appoint visitors.

Prison Medical Officers (Training)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training is being given to prison hospital doctors and staff for dealing with drug addicts who are sent to prison.

Mr. Mellor: Prison medical officers at establishments which receive direct committals from the courts are experienced in the recognition and treatment of the physical symptoms of drug dependency, and many have received psychiatric training or experience. All medical officers are encouraged, and allowed opportunity, to attend external refresher and development courses relevant to this and other aspects of their work. Hospital officers, who work under medical direction, receive theoretical and practical instruction in the nursing care of drug dependents as part of their basic training.

Plastic and Rubber Baton Rounds

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the metropolitan police first acquired plastic baton rounds, in what quantities they hold them, and whether they also possess stocks of rubber baton rounds.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that plastic baton rounds were first acquired by his force in the autumn of 1981, following serious riots in the London area. The commissioner advises that to provide details of the numbers held would not be conducive to operational effectiveness. No rubber baton rounds are held.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baton rounds were fired during training in 1984 by the Metropolitan police; and what was the estimated cost of the training.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 1,597 rounds were fired. The rounds cost a total of £11,875.

CS Gas

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Metropolitan police first acquired stocks of CS gas and whether they have, or have ever had, stocks of CN or CR gas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the force first acquired stocks of CS in the early 1960s for criminal siege purposes. The Metropolitan police have never held stocks of either CN or CR gas.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in each London police district, what is the number of *(a)* CS gas canisters held in armouries, *(b)* weapons that can discharge CS gas canisters and *(c)* officers trained in the use of CS gas;

(2) which of the following departments of the Metropolitan police have stocks of CS gas canisters, gas canister launchers and officers trained in their use; and in each case what are the numbers involved: Commissioner's Office, A1 to A10, B1 to B14, C1 to C13, special branch, D1 to D15, area headquarters, training schools and holding centres.

Mr. Giles Shaw: For operational reasons, it would not be sensible to disclose the quantity of CS equipment held by the Metropolitan police, its location, or the number of officers who have been trained in its use.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many gas projectiles were fired during training in 1984 by the Metropolitan police; and what was the estimated cost of the training.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that no CS gas canisters were fired in public order training; 22 practice grenades were fired; these emit non-toxic smoke. Each practice grenade costs £36.

Mr. Edward Hopson

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer of 12 November 1984, *Official Report*, column 71, he will make a further statement on the progress in the community of Mr. Edward Hopson, released from Broadmoor in April 1982.

Mr. Mellor: I have received detailed monthly reports from a consultant psychiatrist at Broadmoor hospital and a senior probation officer who are responsible for supervising Mr. Hopson. These indicate that he is making satisfactory progress in the community. I shall continue to take a close interest in the case.

Immigration Checks

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost annually of administering immigration checks at all United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Waddington: The overall cost of the immigration service in 1984-85 was approximately £28 million and we estimate that £17 million of this was attributable to work at airports.

Interviews (Tape Recording)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any information as to the estimated average time taken for a police officer to complete the paperwork necessary after an arrest; and how this will compare when tape recorded interviews are in operation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The impact of tape recording on police practices and procedures is one of the matters being studied in the tape recording field trials which will not be completed until next spring. The study includes an

examination of the time spent by police officers writing up notes and statements etc. Some preliminary information is contained in Home Office Research Study No. 58 "The Tape Recording of Police Interviews with Suspects" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office last year, and in Home Office research and planning unit bulletin No. 19, published this year. The current impression is that tape recording enables interviews to proceed more quickly and smoothly than where detailed notes have to be taken.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify the standards required in setting up a tape recording interview room for police use; and what is the estimated cost.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The cost of providing rooms in which tape recorded interviews can be conducted depends entirely upon the suitability of existing rooms for adaptation, and the amount of acoustic enhancement required. The latter will depend in turn on such factors as the proximity of the rooms in question to sources of external noise and the materials from which they are constructed. An interim guide to interview room acoustics was circulated to police authorities and chief constables in July and copies have been placed in the Library of the House (Home Office circular 48/1985). Further guidance, based on a study of interview rooms will be available shortly.

Metropolitan Police (Reorganisation)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what form the presentation took which was made to him by the Metropolitan police about the proposed reorganisation of the force; what documents were provided in support of the presentation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend, the then Home Secretary, met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and a number of his senior officers on 31 October 1984 to discuss his plans for reorganising the Metropolitan police. A summary of the main features of the proposals was provided by the commissioner to those present at the meeting.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of Stare for the Home Department which organisations or individuals the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis consulted or took advice from during the construction of the basic plan for strategy 7B; what is the timetable for consulting public bodies on the implementation of strategy 7B, who will be consulted and to what extent the plans are open to modification; why the existing consultative committees were not consulted over the basic plan of strategy 7B; which Metropolitan police staff organisations were consulted over strategy 7B; on what date they were approached; and what was the substance of their representations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that, before preparing his proposals he sought advice from some 34 outside organisations. e CThese included management consultants, educational establishments, Government Departments and commercial concerns. In addition, advice was sought from 13 police forces in the United Kingdom and eight overseas forces.

The commissioner began consultations with public bodies shortly after he had announced his outline proposals and these consultations will continue throughout 1986 as the reorganisation is implemented. This process will involve borough and district councils, community police consultative groups and other community representatives. The broad framework of the commissioner's plans have now been settled, but the consultations will cover the many detailed points arising from the reorganisation which have yet to be resolved. The emphasis of this consultation will be on ensuring that the reorganisation is tailored to meet local circumstances in the different parts of the Metropolitan police district.

I regret that it was not possible for the commissioner to consult consultative groups or others in advance of announcing his basic proposals. However, advance consultation on detailed plans would have caused damaging delay and uncertainty, with a consequent risk to efficiency and morale.

The commissioner informed the Metropolitan police staff associations of his proposals on 20 November 1984, the day on which they were announced publicly. Since then police staff associations and the civil staff trade union sides have been closely involved in all matters relating to the reorganisation.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of Stare for the Home Department if he met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss the basic plan contained in strategy 7B; and what representations he has received about strategy 7B.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary met the commissioner on 31 October 1984 to discuss in detail his plans for reorganising the management structure of the Metropolitan police.

Representations about the reorganisation have been made by a number of right hon. and hon. Members, and by 12 local bodies, including five community/police consultative groups. Among the points which have been raised are: consultation before the broad proposals were announced; their effect on community/police consultative arrangements; and the future of borough-based community liaison officers.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the rationale behind the proposed eight new areas under strategy 7B of the Metropolitan police: on what basis the boundaries were decided; who took the decision; whether any financial studies were conducted into the cost of strategy 7B prior to the publication of the commissioner's plans; and what studies have been done on the training implications of the implementation of strategy 7B.

Mr. Shaw: The area boundaries which were introduced on 23 September were fixed only after the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis had considered a wide variety of possible configurations. His decisions were based on principles which he considered important in determining the configuration of the new areas. These included the need to avoid altering divisional boundaries; to avoid dividing local authorities between areas; to balance different types of workload and provide variety on each area; to equalise workloads and the number of divisions between areas; and to achieve a workload structure that would enable effective control between headquarters and area, and area and divisions. The commissioner fully consulted my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Home Secretary, who agreed with the proposed area structure.

The commissioner has made it clear that the cost of the reorganisation will be contained within existing resources. One of its primary objectives is to ensure the most effective use of resources. Training requirements were carefully considered, and the necessary training has been taking place since the reorganisation was announced. This will continue as further needs are identified during the implementation phase.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a Minister of his Department last visited the prison officers' mess at Wandsworth prison; what report he made on his visit; what money has now been allocated for improving conditions and facilities in this mess; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend Lord Elton visited the prison, but not the staff mess, in October 1983. Since then the mess has been refurbished. No further improvements are planned because a new staff mess is to be provided outside the prison.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the land opposite Wandsworth prison was taken back from the nursery which had been using the land; what are the present plans to use the land; and what discussions have taken place, and with whom, as to the future use of this land.

Mr. Mellor: An area of land adjacent to the prison was leased to a local nursery in 1958. The lease was renegotiated in 1968 in respect of a slightly smaller area. The land thereby released has been used to provide car parking for prison staff and facilities for the storage of contractors' materials in connection with building works within the prison, and it is likely to continue to be needed for these purposes in the immediate future. We are aware that, in the longer term, the local authority wish to see this land used to provide open space.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables as to which constabularies use the electoral register to assist in the identification of individuals.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. It is common practice for police officers to refer to the electoral register to assist in verifying addresses or to help to locate people, but it would be of limited value in identifying individuals.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables as to which constabularies use or plan to use the electoral register in machine readable form for operational purposes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. I am not aware that any constabulary uses or plans to use the electoral register in machine readable form but, if the police were to obtain copies, the use of the data would be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 in the same way as any other data they hold.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to modify current data protection practices in relation to the use of the electoral register in machine readable form; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. Under the Data Protection Act 1984 any person to whom the electoral registration officer supplies the electoral register in computer-compatible form will be required to register the data with the Data Protection Registrar. He will also be required to comply with the eight data protection principles set out in schedule 1 to the Act. The Data Protection Registrar has power to investigate any breach of these principles and to enforce compliance with them.

Departmental Broadcasting Unit

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the functions of his Department's broadcasting unit; how many staff are currently employed by the unit; what is its budget for the current year; if he will state the role played by the unit *(a)* in relation to his action in respect of the proposed BBC programme "At the Edge of the Union" and *(b)* in respect of any other programmes during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The broadcasting department of the Home Office is responsible for advising the Home Secretary on broadcasting policy, including constitutional and international matters, and the implications of new technological development. It also advises on matters concerning the financing of BBC and independent television and radio services, and on relevant legislation. The Department, which has a staff of 26, is also responsible for policy on data protection.

Staffing and associated running costs for 1985-86 are estimated at £237,000.

Over the past five years the Department has replied to letters from members of the public about individual programmes and it has advised Ministers in their replies to similar correspondence and on any matters in which Ministers wished their views on programmes to be made known to the broadcasting authorities. It performed these functions in relation to the programme "At the Edge of the Union".

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the financial contributions made by his Department to each police authority towards the cost of policing the miners' dispute; (2) if he will estimate the net cost of policing the mining dispute for each police authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Final claims for police grant and the special payment we made available for the additional cost of policing the miners' dispute relating to expenditure arising from the dispute in 1984-85 are now being received and have not yet been audited. It is not yet possible, therefore, to provide the information requested.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police authority the total sums incurred by the Metropolitan police during deployment in the coal dispute, and for each authority, who has paid and who has not and in the latter case what action has been taken to recover the sums due.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police estimate that the additional cost of providing mutual aid to other police forces in connection with the miners' dispute was £18·147 million. These costs fall to be met by the aided forces, and

details, by police force, of the amounts involved and payments made by 9 October are set out below. The Metropolitan police are in correspondence with the police authorities in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and South Yorkshire about the outstanding amounts. My right hon. Friend is considering an application from the commissioner for a determination, under section 14(4) of the Police Act 1964, in respect of Derbyshire.

Mutual aid costs incurred by the Metropolitan Police in connection with the miners' dispute

Aided force	*Additional costs incurred*	*Amounts repaid by 9 October 1985*
Derbyshire	5·496	Nil
Nottinghamshire	6·734	5·094
Leicestershire	1·211	0·836
Warwickshire	0·368	0·368
South Yorkshire	1·225	1·166
North Yorkshire	0·720	0·720
Humberside	1·928	1·928
Durham	0·059	0·059
Sussex	0·295	0·295
Essex	0·006	0·006
Kent	0·105	0·105
Total	18·147	10·577

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a summary of sentences imposed by the courts in cases concerned with riotous assembly and similar crimes in connection with the coal dispute; and if he will also state the numbers charged and the numbers convicted.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am making inquiries and will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average fine imposed by the courts in the last six months in connection with convictions arising from offences committed in connection with the coal dispute.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Prisoners

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to reduce the amount of time spent by prisoners locked in their cells by the provision of additional employment or recreational opportunities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Under the arrangements set out in circular instruction 55/84, a copy of which is in the Library, governors and regional directors are required to manage their resources so as to enable prisoners to spend the maximum possible time out of cells. Employment, recreation and other regime activities will be developed wherever possible, though the extent to which this can be achieved, particularly in local prisons, depends on a number of factors, including the size of the prison population.

"At the Edge of the Union"

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the source of his information concerning the intentions of the BBC to broadcast a programme entitled "At the Edge of the Union", on the basis of which he wrote to the chairman of the BBC's board of governors requesting the corporation to reconsider its decision to broadcast the programme.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend, the then Home Secretary first learnt of the BBC's intention to broadcast this programme when he was asked to comment on it by a member of the staff of *The Sunday Times*. Material about the programme was then published in the press.

Metropolitan Police (Firearms Training)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the length of *(a)* the initial training and *(b)* the annual training of officers in the Metropolitan police who are authorised in the use of firearms; and what is the average number of rounds of ammunition expended by officers in each category.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The initial training of authorised firearms officers lasts for two weeks, during which time the officer can expect to fire about 440 rounds of ammunition. Once the officer has received basic training, he will attend further refresher courses four times a year, each time for one day. On these occasions the officer would be expected to fire between 50 and 80 rounds of ammunition.

Cemeteries (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received alleging irregularities in the running of cemeteries in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A letter was sent to the Home Office in March of this year complaining about the running of the Cefn Coed cemetery in Merthyr Tydfil. The reply sent explained that this was not the responsibility of the Home Office. A letter to the Prime Minister about the cemetery was also copied to the Home Secretary earlier this month. The burial authority with responsibility for the management of this cemetery is the Merthyr Tydfil borough council.

Disabled People (Cinemas)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his plans that would require disabled persons in wheelchairs to be accompanied by an able-bodied adult before entering a cinema; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the draft regulations under the Cinemas Act 1985 recently issued by his Department for consultation and, in particular, on the proposal that blind people should be admitted to a cinema only if accompanied by a sighted person;

(2) what is his policy in relation to encouraging independence and mobility for blind and other handicapped people.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the answers given on 24 October to questions from the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam).

Data Protection

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what distinction will be made in the guidelines for the operation of the Data Protection Act between the management of personal affairs or recreational purposes on the one hand and any personal business affairs on the other hand;

(2) what guidelines exist in respect of the operation of the Data Protection Act with regard to the point at which a computer bureau will be deemed to be in operation when equipment leaves its owners's possession for use by another.

Mr. Waddington: It is for the Data Protection Registrar, rather than for my right hon. Friend, to offer guidance on the interpretation and application of the Data Protection Act. I understand from the Registrar that he has not, as yet, offered any general guidance on the two points raised by the hon. Member but he will be happy to advise the hon. Member if he would write to him explaining the precise circumstances he has in mind.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many entries the data protection registrar expects to include in his register; how many of these will relate to financial organisations which hold information on the financial affairs of individuals; and what is the likely cost to a data subject in time, in postal charges, and in fees permitted under the Act, of checking those entries.

Mr. Waddington: As I indicated in reply to questions from the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 26 July 1985 at column *807-8*, it is extremely difficult to estimate the likely number of registrations under the Data Protection Act. The registrar's current working assumption is, however, that he will receive about 300,000 initial applications, with 90,000 per year thereafter. No estimates have been made of the proportion of these applications which will be made by financial organisations. Nor is it possible to estimate the costs referred to in the last part of the question.

Metropolitan Police (Cost-effectiveness)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for introducing a cost-effectiveness study into the Metropolitan police estimates.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend fully accepts, as does the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, the need to ensure cost-effectiveness and value for money in the use of Metropolitan police resources—particularly manpower, which accounts for some 80 per cent. of the force's budget. This is a constantly recurring theme in the regular discussions which my right hon. Friend and officials have with the Metropolitan police; it is specifically reflected in the force's goal for 1985 and it is one of the prime objectives of the force reorganisation. It will also figure prominently in the urgent work which my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 21 October at column 31 he has set in hand to assess the manpower needs for the force. Arrangements approved by his predecessor for examining particular areas of force expenditure are now in place and the first such review, of the management of the vehicle fleet, is well advanced.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effect on existing training programmes in crime prevention, community relations and race awareness of the extra training requirements arising from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The special retraining exercise for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 is nearly complete. It will not be a continuing requirement, since the 1984 Act provisions now form part of basic training for new recruits.

Some short-term readjustments of training programmes have been necessary, but training continues in the three important areas specified in the question, and has been tailored to take account of the provisions of the Act. The Act training programme, by underlining the need for open and accountable exercise of police powers, will itself have contributed to improved awareness of the need for good relations between the police and the community.

Gaming Act

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the Gaming Act 1968 to cover gaming on ships outside territorial waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Public Disorder (Brixton)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what sentences have been imposed by the courts following cases which have been held in connection with alleged offences committed during the Brixton riots.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of such court proceedings are being compiled and will be made available in due course.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many arrests have been made in connection with the alleged rapes during the Brixton riots.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that no arrests have been made to date, but that inquiries are continuing.

Motoring Offences (Fines)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average fine imposed by the courts in the last six months in connection with convictions for motoring offences, other than parking offences.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is shown in tables 6, 11 and 12 of the publication "Offences relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, 1983—Supplementary Tables", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The issue for 1984 will be published shortly.

Crime Prevention Officers

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crime prevention officers

were employed by each police force in England and Wales in each of the years 1980 to 1985; and if he will make a statement on the Government's policy as to crime prevention officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The full information request for each force is not readily available centrally. I understand, however, that there are some 650 crime prevention officers in police forces in England and Wales. It is for individual chief officers of police to decide on the disposition of their manpower resources but the Government believe that crime prevention officers have a vital role in stimulating preventive activity within the community.

Licensing Law

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals for the review of licensing law in the light of the conclusions of the third case study contained in Home Office research study No. 86, "Implementing Crime Prevention Measures"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We shall take account of this study in our current review of permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales.

Civil Defence

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on civil defence in each of the years 1980 to 1985; and how has the cost been divided between central and local government.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Expenditure figures for the United Kingdom are as follows:

£ million

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86**
Central Government	25·2	30·1	43·6	54·4	65·9	71·7
Local and police authorities	6·3	8·2	9·5	12·2	15·2	18·0
Sub-total	31·5	38·3	53·1	66·6	81·1	88·7
Central Government administration (estimate)	2·7	3·2	3·6	4·1	4·6	5·9
Total	34·2	41·5	56·7	70·7	85·7	94·6

* Estimate.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what land and premises are currently held by the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils purchased with the aid of grants paid under regulations made under section 3 of the Civil Defence Act 1948.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not readily available centrally in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Metropolitan Police (Armed Searches)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many armed searches were carried out by the Metropolitan police in domestic premises in districts L and Y, respectively, during each of the years 1982 to 1984 and so far in 1985.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for each Metropolitan police district, on how many occasions armed police have entered private homes (i) with a warrant and (ii) without a warrant.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Metropolitan Police (Establishment)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the strength of the civilian employees in the Metropolitan police in 1965 and 1979; and what is the establishment now.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 December 1965 the strength of the Metropolitan police civil staff was 3,355; on 30 April 1979 the figure was 11,837. The current civil staff ceiling is 13,482.

Charitable Bodies (Trustees)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which charitable bodies the Greater London council is entitled to appoint trustees.

Mr. Mellor: The Greater London council is entitled to appoint trustees to a charitable body if the trust instrument provides for such appointments. Information about such charities has been sought from the Greater London council, but has not yet been received.

Property (Charitable Purposes)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what property is held by the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils for charitable purposes.

Mr. Mellor: This information has been sought, but has not yet been received, from the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

BBC (Staff)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis, and for what reasons, members of the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation are positively vetted by the security services; whether the security services advise the British

Broadcasting Corporation as to which members of the corporation's staff should undergo such vetting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The positive vetting system is used to investigate the reliability of those who are expected to have regular access to highly classified information. It takes place with the knowledge and consent of those concerned. It is applied only to a very small number of staff of the BBC in accordance with the procedures and criteria described in the Government's "Statement on the Recommendations of the Security Commission" (Cmnd. 8540, May 1982).

Mrs. Muriel McCullough

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Mrs. Muriel McCullough is being held in Durham gaol as a category A prisoner.

Mr. Mellor: Mrs. Muriel McCullough is not a category A prisoner. Durham prison accommodates other sentenced female prisoners as well as those in category A.

SCOTLAND

Communicative Aids (Financial Support)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, why his Department has ceased supporting financially the work of Dr. Philip Odor and the Godfrey Thomson unit in the University of Edinburgh in their work on communicative aids for language and learning.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The communications aids for language and learning centre, established in 1983, was funded by the Department of Trade and Industry, Lothian regional council and the urban renewal unit until March 1985. To allow the centre time to seek alternative funding sources, the Scottish Education Department offered a grant towards establishment and research costs for the financial year 1985-86, to cease on 31 March 1986. The grant was accepted on these terms. My Department, however, is not in a position to finance the centre on a permanent basis.

Sport (Religious Discrimination)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to ban religious discrimination in sport.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Homoeopathy

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the total expenditure in each region of the Health Service in Scotland on homoeopathy in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not collected centrally. The running costs of the one homoeopathic hospital in Scotland — the homoeopathic hospital, Glasgow—amounted to £486,000 in the year ended 31 March 1985.

Community Industry (Strathclyde)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the monthly increase and the total number of persons employed by community industry in the Strathclyde region during the last month for which figures are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On 12 September 1985, the latest date for which information is available, 1,060 persons were participating in community industry in Strathclyde region, a decrease of two over the previous month.

Employment (Greenock)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many redundancy notifications were given during the last month for which statistics are available in the Greenock travel-to-work area.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Statistics are compiled from notifications to the Department of Employment of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers. During the month of September 1985, three such notifications affecting 777 workers were made by employers in the Greenock and Port Glasgow jobcentre areas. The figures are collected by jobcentre area, and precise figures for the Greenock travel-to-work area are not therefore available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the employment consequences of the stated intentions of Scott Lithgow Limited to make 900 members of the work force at Greenock and Port Glasgow redundant and of Clark Kincaid to make 80 members of the work force at Greencock redundant.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The numbers of those to be made redundant are still uncertain. Were 980 redundancies to take place and all those persons were to claim unemployment benefit in the Greenock travel-to-work area, it is estimated that the direct short-run effect would be to increase the unemployment rate in the Greenock TTWA by around two percentage points. The Government recognise the serious problems of the area, which has development area status, and give their full support to the Inverclyde initiative.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many community programme places were being supported in the Greenock travel-to-work area and the Strathclyde region during the last month for which statistics are available; and how many of those places were part-time and full-time places, respectively.

Mr. Allan Stewart: At 30 September 1985 there were 556 filled places on the community programme in the Greenock travel-to-work area. Of these, 459 were part-time and 97 were full-time. At the same date there were 12,555 filled places in Stratchlyde region of which 9,583 were part-time and 2,972 were full-time.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in the Greenock travel-to-work area were being supported by the temporary short-time working scheme during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The temporary short-time working compensation scheme closed for applications on 31 March 1984. No potentially redundant jobs were being supported in the Greenock travel-to-work area in September 1984, the last month for which statistics are available.

Inverclyde Initiative

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created by the Inverclyde initiative to date; what number are full-time positions; what number are part-time positions; and what percentage of jobs have been filled by male applicants.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Inverclyde initiative was launched only at the end of March this year for a period of five years. Its aim of regenerating the economy in Inverclyde cannot be achieved overnight. The action taken to date had concentrated on environmental improvements, preparation of land for industrial development, assisting existing companies to relocate and thereby strengthen their future prospects, and identifying projects which will generate investment and attract business to the area. I have no doubt that new and permanent jobs will be created as these projects come to fruition, but no figures are yet available.

Unemployment (Strathclyde)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the total of young people who have become unemployed and who have registered at unemployment benefit offices in each travel-to-work area in Strathclyde in the last month for which statistics are available;

(2) how many young persons in the Greenock travel to work area have been unemployed during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's letter of 22 October 1984. The information requested is available in the Library.

Regional Assistance (Strathclyde)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number and value of offers of regional assistance made to companies in the Strathclyde travel-to-work areas and in Strathclyde as a whole for the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In September 1985, there were two offers of regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 with a combined value of £1 million and 103 offers of new style regional development grant with a total value of £2·54 million made to companies in Strathclyde. Information of the type requested for old style regional development grant is not available.

It is not possible to give details of offers of regional selective assistance for Strathclyde travel-to-work areas as to do so would disclose information on individual companies. The following table shows offers of new style regional development grant by travel-to-work areas within Strathclyde for September 1985.

Travel-to-work area	*Number of offers*	*Value of offers (£ million)*
Cumnock & Sanquhar, Dumbarton	5	0·04
Glasgow	48	1·60
Greenock	4	0·03
Irvine	12	0·26
Kilmarnock	3	0·04
Lanarkshire	31	0·59
Total	103	*2·54

* Figures for individual travel-to-work areas may not add to total shown because of rounding.

Youth Training Scheme (Strathclyde)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many youth training scheme places were identified and supported in the Greenock travel-to-work area and the Strathclyde region during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: During September 1985, 25 and 887 places were approved locally for the Greenock travel-to-work area and Strathclyde region respectively. The majority of places have already been approved for young people entering the youth training scheme in 1985-86.

Saughton Prison

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take immediate steps to relieve the overcrowding in Saughton prison, Edinburgh and elsewhere in Scotland; if he will make it his policy to abolish overcrowding in Scottish prisons as soon as practicable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Action was taken in March of this year to reduce the level of overcrowding in Edinburgh prison by providing accommodation for 50 under-21 remand inmates, who would normally be held in Edinburgh prison, in Polmont young offenders' institution.

I can hold out no prospect of being able to afford any further significant relief to Edinburgh prison until phase II of Shotts prison becomes available in the spring of 1987.

It is already Government policy to end overcrowding, which mainly affects Edinburgh and Barlinnie prisons and Longriggend remand institution, as soon as practicable.

Prisons

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what capital expenditure is currently being committed for prison building in Scotland; what detailed plans he has for the future of the Scottish prison system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: It is estimated that £11·7 million will be spent on capital projects within the Scottish prison service during the current financial year.

A review of the use of inmate accommodation within the Scottish penal system which was nearing completion will now have to be looked at further in the light of recent increases in the penal population.

Defective Housing

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make available the £3 million unallocated funds to local authorities in Scotland in the course of the next few weeks under the terms of the Housing Defects Act 1984; and whether he has taken and will take into account the needs of defective housing in the public sector in calculating the rate support grant formula for Edinburgh.

Mr. Ancram: Local authorities have been informed that they will be issued with supplementary capital allocations to cover their estimated expenditure under the

provisions of the Housing Defects Act in 1985-86. Whatever proportion of the £3 million unallocated consent is required will be so issued. Any balance will be issued in the form of general enhancements of capital allocations. Local authority expenditure on defective housing is not relevant expenditure for rate support grant purposes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when contractors will be issued with a licence for the remedying of defective housing in Scotland, both in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Ancram: A number of applications for the licence of repair systems have been made to PRC Homes Ltd. and approved methods of repair are likely to emerge in the coming months.

Judges (Appointments)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in view of the increased work load of the Scottish courts on drugs cases and other subjects and the length of time for appeals to be heard, he will consider seeking to create another Scottish judge or judges.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) on 15 July at column *36*. Since then one additional judge of the Court of Session has been appointed in September 1985.

West Highlands Free Press

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether grant or loan support has been provided to the West Highlands *Free Press* by the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Mr. John MacKay: The board has provided both grant and loan assistance.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the 15 per cent. of youth training scheme leavers in Scotland who receive Manpower Services Commission questionnaires regarding their employment status reply.

Mr. Younger: The response rate in Scotland to the Manpower Services Commission's sample survey of 15 per cent. of young people who left the youth training scheme between June 1984 and March 1985 was 64 per cent.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of youth training scheme leavers in Scotland who left the scheme in June are currently in full-time employment.

Mr. Younger: The information requested is not available. Results from the Manpower Services Commission's 100 per cent. survey of young people who left the scheme in June are expected in December 1985. The results of the survey will be placed in the Library.

Agriculture (Severe Weather)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will be able to arrive at a decision regarding financial aid to the Scottish farming industry, in the light of last winter's weather.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 24 October.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will permit farmers in Scotland to claim grant aid under the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme after 31 December if eligible work already started or planned cannot be finished due to adverse weather conditions.

Mr. John MacKay: The agriculture and horticulture grant scheme already provides for an extended closing date for claims for certain important operations including reseeding and regeneration of grassland and arterial drainage in Scotland. Additionally, the Government are urgently considering what steps should be taken to assist farmers whose businesses have been affected by the bad weather. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Independent Schools (Boarding Allowances)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money the Government paid in each year since 1978-79 to independent schools in the form of boarding allowances in respect of the education of the children of diplomatic staff.

Mr. Eggar: The total cost to the diplomatic service wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including communications departments, in each year since 1978-79 for boarding school allowances, was:

	£
1978-79	3,791,665
1979-80	4,011,280
1980-81	4,962,267
1981-82	5,663,088
1982-83	7,465,177
1983-84	5,940,981
1984-85	6,239,908

East Timor

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards East Timor in the light of Amnesty International's report on the alleged violation of human rights in that country, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Rifkind: Our policy is to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General to promote contacts between the Indonesian and Portuguese Governments aimed at achieving a just settlement in East Timor. We draw encouragement from the United Nation's Secretary General's latest report on East Timor, copies of which I am placing in the Library of the House.

Export Stabilisation Scheme

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Economic Community Commission document, 8667/85 concerning the establishment of an export stabilisation system; what discussions have been held by European Economic Community Foreign Ministers on this subject; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Rifkind: At its meeting on 1 October, the Foreign Affairs Council agreed that the European Community should offer to establish a new system of compensation for losses of export earnings on various commodities for the benefit of a number of least-developed countries not already covered by the provisions of the Lomé convention. An announcement to this effect as made at the mid-term review of the UN-sponsored substantial new programme of action for least developed countries held in Geneva from 30 September-11 October.

Hong Kong (Travel Documents)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the arrangements for the introduction of international travel documents for citizens of Hong Kong; whether he is satisfied that such documents will be accepted by other countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. It is intended that British National (Overseas) passports should be introduced from 1 July 1987. Their format will be the same as that of passports issued by United Kingdom passport issuing posts to other British Nationals. The Government will do all that they can to secure for BN(O) passport holders the same access to other countries as that enjoyed by holders of British Dependent Territories citizens passports.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received during each of the last two years regarding Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind This year we have recived representations from 11 hon. Members in the form of letters on the case of Raoul Wallenberg, and answers have been given to nine parliamentary questions. The corresponding figures for 1984 were three letters and two parliamentary questions. A moderate flow of correspondence from members of the public has also been received over the period.

Boarding School Allowances

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money the Government paid in each year since 1979 to independent schools in the form of boarding allowances in respect of the education of the children of diplomatic staff *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in constant 1985 prices; and for each, how many children that covered.

Mr. Eggar The total cost to the diplomatic service wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including Communications Departments in each financial year since 1979-80 for boarding school allowances, was:

	£
1979-80	4,011,280
1980-81	4,962,267
1981-82	5,663,088
1982-83	7,465,177
1983-84	5,940,981
1984-85	6,239,908

The 1982-83 figure reflects a change in the method and timing of payment from monthly to termly in advance. As a once and for all result, the equivalent of 15 months payment was made in the 12-month period.

In constant 1985 prices the cost was:

	£
1979-80	5,986,985
1980-81	6,478,155
1981-82	6,654,627
1982-83	8,230,625
1983-84	6,247,088
1984-85	6,239,908

I shall write to the hon. Member with the other information he requests.

Irish Ambassador

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since 1969 the Irish ambassador has been summoned to his Department to explain statements made by Irish Ministers or other public persons in the Republic critical of the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Rifkind: The detailed information requested — covering some 16 years — could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Peace Organisations (Aid)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much grant-in-aid was given to Peace through NATO in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86; how much aid was given to other organisations working for peace; and if he will list those organisations.

Mr. Rifkind: Peace through NATO received grants-in-aid of £68,000 in 1983-84 and £71,500 in 1984-85. There is a provision for a grant-in-aid of £73,000 in 1985-86.

During the same periods the following organisations working for peace were also given grants-in-aid by the FCO:

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*Provision for 1985-86*
	£	£	£
British Atlantic Committee	45,000	47,000	49,000
United Nations Association	24,000	24,000	24,000

A grant of £3,000 was given to the Council on Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament in the current financial year to help finance its international conference.

Indian Subcontinent (Entry Clearance)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each British diplomatic post in the Indian subcontinent the current expected time from first application to *(a)* interview and *(b)* decision for entry clearance for (i) fiancé(e)s and (ii) spouses.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the waiting time between first application and interview on 30 June for fiancés and spouses in the queues was published for the main entry clearance posts in the subcontinent in the quarterly Home Office statistical bulletin "Control of Immigration Statistics", table 10 of issue 22/85 copies of which are in the Library of the House. At that time fiancées did not require prior entry clearance. The immigration rules and queueing arrangements were changed on 26 August. The waiting times for the groups in the new queues will not have stabilised until the end of this year.

Each application for entry clearance is treated on its merits and waiting times from first application to decision vary from case to case. Statistics are not, therefore, available.

Ministerial Conference, San José

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to implement the recommendations of the San José conference in September 1984 directed to all European Economic Community and central American countries and, in particular, with respect to developing, extending and diversifying their mutual trade to the fullest possible extent.

Mr. Rifkind: Our policy towards central America is designed to support the efforts of the Contadora group to promote conditions of political stability in which the fundamental social and economic problems of the region can be tackled.

Since the San José meeting, we have been working with our European partners to ensure that the follow-up conference to be held in Luxembourg on 11-12 November will fulfil the commitment entered into at San José to promote stronger economic and political relations between the two regions. We and our partners have remained in close touch with the Governments of central America and the Contadora states. Arrangments for regular political dialogue between the two regions are likely to be agreed at the Luxembourg meeting in November.

In parallel, the European Commission in consultation with members of the Community and the central American countries, have been examining how best to strengthen economic links between the two regions. An economic framework agreement on the lines envisaged in the San José communiqué has been negotiated. It is hoped that this will be signed at the Luxembourg meeting. The agreement will include provision for additional EC aid to central America. The additonal aid will have the objective of promoting inter-regional integration and the development of central America as a whole.

East Timor

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding human rights violations in East Timor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received letters from hon. Members on behalf of Amnesty International and others about human rights in East Timor and understand the concern. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised East Timor with President Soeharto in April. The situation there shows some improvement. I should also refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Field) earlier today.

Indonesia

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indonesian ambassador in relation to the state of human rights in his country.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited Indonesia earlier this year, and we maintain regular contact with the Indonesian authorities. The Indonesian Government are well aware of our position on human rights.

Middle East

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the amendments which were considered by Her Majesty's Government to the statement on the middle east discussed with the two Palestine Liberation Organisation members of the proposed Jordanian/Palestinian delegation; and if he will indicate which of these amendments were acceptable to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Rifkind: The Palestinian members of the joint delegation put forward without commitment the following wording in place of the statement already agreed with the Jordanian Prime Minister:

> The members of the joint delegation reiterated their personal support for a peaceful settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbours on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council, under the appropriate auspices. They stated that in accordance with these resolutions a settlement should recognise the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination within the context of a Jordanian/Palestinian confederation, as well as the right of all states in the area to exist within the secure recognised boundaries. They confirmed their opposition to all forms of terrorism and violence from whatever source.

We made clear our view that the statement would be acceptable only if it contained an explicit reference to the right of Israel to exist within secure and recognised borders.

DEFENCE

Torpedo Development Programmes

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to improve the financial efficiency of torpedo development programmes in the light of the report of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government's formal response to the report of the Public Accounts Committee on the torpedo programme will be published in the form of a Treasury minute later this year. It would therefore not be appropriate to anticipate this response at the present time.

Apprentice Training Centre, Rosyth

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the apprentice training centre at Rosyth dockyard if his

proposals for commercial management go ahead; whether his Department or the contractor would run the centre; and what obligations will be laid down for its continued support.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Arrangements will be made to ensure the continuation of apprentice training at Rosyth dockyard after commercial management is introduced. Plans are at present being drawn up within my Department and these will be made public in due course.

Saudi Arabia (Warplanes)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent export contract for the supply of warplanes to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 26 September 1985, the Minister of Defence and Aviation of Saudi Arabia and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence signed, on behalf of their respective Governments, a memorandum of understanding providing for the purchase by Saudi Arabia of 48 Tornado IDS, 24 Tornado ADV, 30 Hawk and 30 PC-9 aircraft as part of the continued modernisation of the Royal Saudi air force.

The sale will provide much needed work for the British aerospace industry into the 1990s.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid to each London borough and to each metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1985-86 expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is in the following tables, which should be read with the usual explanatory notes.

Rate support grant in constant 1985-86 prices

£ thousands

	1978-79 Column 1	*1979-80 Column 2*	*1980-81 Column 3*	*1981-82 Column 4*	*1982-83 Column 5*	*1983-84 Column 6*	*1984-85 Column 7*	*1985-86*
Barking and Dagenham	46,544	43,391	42,030	35,141	32,691	30,687	28,061	27,532
Barnet	73,941	69,434	66,880	58,016	54,453	45,109	40,809	19,708
Bexley	63,047	60,983	60,802	57,122	54,069	51,797	48,950	47,604
Brent	91,463	86,840	82,373	69,603	69,890	58,868	58,160	50,730
Bromley	81,469	77,696	75,564	67,506	60,498	53,896	50,240	47,465
Croydon	85,477	84,484	82,539	72,798	65,521	55,135	51,030	49,983
Ealing	80,747	76,135	73,469	69,997	72,378	65,288	61,909	60,923
Enfield	66,580	65,477	64,481	58,019	55,459	50,717	47,256	46,170
Haringey	90,145	84,892	83,513	74,548	72,088	63,299	56,820	47,918
Harrow	49,612	46,917	46,420	42,895	41,812	37,869	35,576	33,362
Havering	68,497	63,561	61,608	57,956	54,328	49,825	48,222	46,115
Hillingdon	50,703	50,455	49,575	40,236	33,888	26,335	23,806	17,959
Hounslow	52,050	50,587	48,204	35,655	34,406	28,003	19,281	9,380
Kingston-upon-Thames	32,330	31,530	30,997	26,904	24,402	21,260	19,353	17,590
Merton	47,358	45,392	44,464	40,347	35,911	32,368	30,516	31,609
Newham	88,358	82,605	81,488	77,637	84,855	82,089	79,566	66,061
Redbridge	62,083	60,484	59,557	53,267	51,292	46,821	44,245	43,450
Richmond-upon-Thames	40,676	39,376	38,433	34,700	29,073	24,501	21,202	16,333
Sutton	46,056	43,325	42,054	37,605	34,364	30,869	30,039	28,557
Waltham Forest	77,375	74,896	73,446	66,939	69,974	71,925	68,316	65,135
City of London	698	655	530	20,508	617	595	594	589
Camden	58,244	59,201	49,806	22,070	14,861	5,755	5,563	5,330
Greenwich	58,666	59,361	58,263	39,973	35,690	28,695	26,160	35,557
Hackney	70,545	69,623	67,246	55,465	51,204	50,609	46,944	37,032
Hammersmith and Fulham	55,292	54,825	52,659	42,448	39,628	38,998	35,470	37,996
Islington	67,218	65,157	62,372	38,149	36,734	38,109	4,082	25,434
Kensington and Chelsea	55,369	53,690	49,806	24,420	25,325	23,420	15,075	15,040
Lambeth	88,808	88,849	81,865	68,670	67,602	58,306	39,202	45,680
Lewisham	86,177	85,415	82,310	59,073	55,743	51,275	45,140	48,065
Southwark	83,300	81,490	78,103	57,820	46,757	39,144	18,727	42,532
Tower Hamlets	55,804	54,009	49,660	38,232	32,566	28,168	22,892	21,550
Wandsworth	94,539	89,603	85,872	60,292	54,940	56,054	52,378	53,671
Westminster	56,262	61,710	59,702	62,214	40,993	15,168	14,800	14,508
Greater Manchester								
Bolton	80,141	80,009	79,185	65,225	62,968	62,445	60,780	57,974
Bury	52,507	50,556	50,900	38,709	35,795	36,745	34,701	32,193
Manchester	188,975	180,107	177,765	141,277	113,782	111,375	100,993	98,830
Oldham	75,659	74,585	72,505	63,979	58,990	59,040	57,419	55,885
Rochdale	74,352	73,810	73,019	59,284	57,036	56,977	53,765	50,019
Salford	91,626	88,769	87,177	72,916	64,803	63,042	59,803	51,775
Stockport	75,972	70,125	68,901	54,519	49,678	48,057	45,583	41,144
Tameside	73,703	70,951	72,538	57,150	53,740	52,522	50,529	44,311
Trafford	48,849	43,950	42,698	34,763	30,291	28,158	25,766	22,229
Wigan	97,020	95,130	94,920	77,262	74,092	67,508	67,045	60,338
Merseyside								
Knowsley	65,800	61,049	60,500	50,745	45,858	43,829	41,691	37,195

	1978-79 Column 1	1979-80 Column 2	1980-81 Column 3	1981-82 Column 4	1982-83 Column 5	1983-84 Column 6	1984-85 Column 7	1985-86
Liverpool	192,489	186,457	190,571	147,876	134,422	135,607	124,171	34,881
St. Helens	55,900	53,690	54,864	43,316	40,563	40,604	38,627	37,513
Sefton	88,851	85,054	83,458	62,494	57,177	54,258	50,915	48,201
Wirral	103,539	98,092	97,090	73,683	68,362	68,135	64,734	58,713
South Yorkshire								
Barnsley	77,692	77,964	82,022	60,809	55,693	55,113	52,245	49,019
Doncaster	95,981	93,463	96,798	73,961	67,314	66,763	63,361	57,569
Rotherham	85,188	85,211	85,063	68,008	62,262	61,117	58,875	53,851
Sheffield	165,193	154,894	160,245	116,793	105,135	96,469	94,328	90,801
Tyne and Wear								
Gateshead	72,135	69,986	71,545	54,198	48,947	48,734	46,471	42,372
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	88,236	84,313	84,339	60,608	44,297	43,445	40,347	20,017
North Tyneside	68,036	66,871	66,371	49,729	44,436	42,756	41,784	37,254
South Tyneside	65,671	63,920	63,331	50,425	45,489	44,007	41,509	39,110
Sunderland	107,622	105,342	104,196	78,267	74,200	71,608	64,906	59,595
West Midlands								
Birmingham	295,629	281,062	272,876	216,762	195 834	209,027	204,716	180,487
Coventry	95,602	88,652	88,349	73,929	70,704	68,561	64,137	57,527
Dudley	58,306	54,056	52,786	43,751	40,670	42,015	41,372	38,777
Sandwell	76,471	69,779	69,521	49,664	53,149	58,172	57,011	53,339
Solihull	46,219	41,907	40,483	34,931	34,000	33,789	31,716	28,310
Walsall	67,580	62,753	63,764	50,990	45,074	51,846	49,731	45,686
Wolverhampton	70,303	65,290	66,358	54,663	52,429	52,955	50,544	47,924
West Yorkshire								
Bradford	161,110	159,043	158,093	127,812	122,776	125,434	119,855	111,987
Calderdale	66,022	64,965	65,275	53,411	49,710	48,834	47,116	43,275
Kirklees	115,827	119,210	122,645	97,257	97,681	98,100	95,767	88,550
Leeds	194,593	190,664	190,654	150,663	135,719	135,652	131,256	119,956
Wakefield	89,567	88,583	88,131	70,019	63,409	63,097	60,462	52,104

Notes:

The figures for 1978/79 to 1980/81 comprise needs, resources and domestic elements; those for 1981/82 onwards comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant.

Prior to 1981/82, no grants were paid to Metropolitan counties or to precepting authorities in London. Resources element was paid only to qualifying rating authorities. Where appropriate, figures for 1981/82 include grant paid in respect of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan Police; for 1982/83 grant in respect of the Metropolitan Police is included; in subsequent years Metropolitan Police grant was also paid direct. Figures for grant paid over the run of years shown, therefore, are not on a comparable basis.

Grant payments have been revalued to 1985/86 constant prices using the GDP deflator. Figures for 1978/79 to 1982/83 are based upon final entitlements; for later years latest entitlements have been used.

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have received visits from members of his Department's urban housing renewal unit and the number of visits which each has received.

Sir George Young: The urban housing renewal unit has already visited 22 of the 69 local authorities which it has identified as having the most severe housing management problems:

Authority	*Number*
Barking and Dagenham	1
Birmingham	1
Bolton	2
Bradford	3
Calderdale	5
Coventry	1
Derby	1
Ealing	2
Gateshead	1
Hammersmith and Fulham	1
Kingston-upon-Hull	2
Knowsley	1
Langbaurgh	3
Leeds	2
Manchester	1
Middlesborough	1
Mansfield	1
Rochdale	1
Solihull	1
South Tyneside	1
Tower Hamlets	2
Wandsworth	1

In addition, the following 21 other authorities have requested and received visits by the unit:

Authority	*Number*
Bath	1
Broxbourne	1
Chelmsford	1
Chester	1
Exeter	1
Grimsby	1
Harlow	1
Harrow	1
Hove	1
Kings Lynn	1
Maidstone	1
Nuneaton	1
Runcorn	1
Rushmoor	2
South Holland	1
South Kesteven	1
Three Rivers	1

Authority	Number
Wear Valley	1
Westminster	1
Wirral	1
Woking	1

National Housing Stock

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission an independent inquiry into the state of the national housing stock and the condition of council housing in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend expects to publish the findings of the Department's recent inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock shortly. The next English house condition survey, covering the national housing stock, will take place next year.

Home Purchase Assistance Scheme

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons have made use of the home purchase assistance scheme since 1978; how much has been paid out in each year; what was the maximum value for any one individual when first set up; when last it was revised; and, allowing for inflation, what is its value now in real terms.

Sir George Young: Benefits under the scheme began to be paid in 1980. Since then about 22,000 first-time buyers have received them. The amounts paid out each year are as follows:

£ million

Financial Year	Payments	*Net Cost
1980-81	0·42	0·42
1981-82	3·86	3·86
1982-83	4·36	4·24
1983-84	2·95	2·48
1984-85	2·50	1·60
1985-86†	0·90	0·50

* Amounts paid out in loans and bonuses less repayments of loans and interest charges on delayed repayments.

† To 30 September 1985.

The maximum amount payable to any individual at the scheme's inception was £710, comprising a loan of £600 free of interest and capital repayments for five years, and a once-for-all bonus payment of £110. The level of benefits has not been revised. In the period since the scheme began retail prices have risen by 37 per cent. In terms of the prices prevailing at the time the scheme started the maximum bonus is now worth £69 and the loan £378.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of severance and redundancy payments following abolition of the Merseyside county council.

Mr. Tracey: I have nothing to add to the estimates given in the answer which I received from my right hon. Friend on 30 November 1984, at column *611*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will have discussions with the London residuary body and the residuary bodies in the metropolitan counties about holding their meetings in public.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his meeting with hon. Members representing Liverpool constituencies to discuss the city's budget situation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The five Liverpool Labour Members of Parliament and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) came to see me on 26 September at their request. I made clear my view that the solution to Liverpool city council's budget problem remained firmly in the hands of the council. Its officers had put before it options which would enable services to be maintained during this financial year, and what was required was the political will to take the necessary decisions. I said that I was not prepared to meet city councillors while they continued to behave unreasonably. There has been no change in my position since that meeting.

Water (Lead Content)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any information on the effectiveness of raising pH levels of water and the addition of orthophosphates to reduce plumbosolvency.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. Information and advice on this subject is contained in "Lead in Potable Water", technical note No. 5, issued by my Department in May 1984. I am sending the hon. Member a copy.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has made an assessment of the need to replace lead piping in water supply systems in order to reduce lead content in water;

(2) if he has made any assessment of the number of dwellings in England and Wales which need replacement of lead piping in order to reduce lead content in water, and of the cost.

Mr. John Patten: As the lead concentration in a dwelling's water supply is dependent on a variety of factors, it is not possible to make any exact assessment of the number of dwellings where pipe replacement would be necessary. Surveys carried out by water undertakers over the last decade at the request of the Government indicate that between 100,000 and 300,000 household may have some pipework that needs to be replaced. This would normally be the property's service pipe and pipework to a drinking water tap, which is the owner's responsibility, and the communication pipe between the water main and the service pipe, which is the water undertaker's responsibility.

The average cost per dwelling is estimated at just over £500; on our estimates, the householder would on average bear about two thirds of this cost. Those costs which fall to the water authorities will be met from within their existing resources.

Croxteth Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the future of Croxteth hall in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has received several representations about the future of Croxteth hall, including those from the trustees of the Sefton Estate, the Friends of Merseyside County Museums and Art Galleries and the Croxteth Hall Community Forum.

My right hon. Friend fully appreciates the strength of local feeling that adequate arrangements must be made for the future of this property.

Housing Stock

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the condition of the local authority housing stock.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 23 October, at column *164*, to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Nugee Committee

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the Nugee committee on the management of privately owned rented accommodation.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend expects to receive the committee's report shortly.

Merseyside

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the figures for completions of new dwellings by housing co-operatives and housing associations for the period 1973 to 1984 for all the constituent local authorities of Merseyside;

(2) if he will give the figures for council house completions in the period 1973 to 1984 for all the constituent local authorities of Merseyside.

Sir George Young: The available information reported by the local authorities is as follows:

New Dwellings Completed in Merseyside: 1974 to 1984

Numbers

	Knowsley		*Wirral*		*Sefton*		*St. Helens*		*Liverpool*	
	H.A.	*L.A.*	*H.A.*	*L.A.*	*H.A.*	*L.A.*	*H.A.*	*L.A.*	*H.A.*	*L.A.*
1974	*33	*315	100	991	*—	*400	*49	*594	150	1,649
1975	72	102	21	342	60	61	—	340	372	1,845
1976	18	—	70	62	247	346	51	138	65	1,191
1977	210	—	358	215	268	239	31	119	130	1,192
1978	12	13	212	450	367	222	124	100	179	595
1979	38	—	63	187	297	38	8	250	252	588
1980	—	45	191	105	233	100	114	104	406	642
1981	52	—	309	197	59	150	191	140	250	287
1982	—	—	115	10	124	82	110	128	179	—
1983	—	—	194	101	153	176	108	71	691	268
1984	—	—	123	144	171	178	54	—	629	525

Notes:

H.A. = Housing associations including Housing Corporation.

L.A. = Local authority only.

* Including estimated apportionment of dwelling completions reported by predecessor authorities in the first quarter 1974.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the comparative figures for completed improvement grants in the public and private sectors for all of the five constituent local authorities of Merseyside for the period from 1973 to 1984.

Sir George Young: The available information reported by the local authorities is as follows:

Improvement grants: Merseyside 1974-1984

	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Knowsley	*188	97	93	29	24	57	62	53	117	358	409
Liverpool	4,279	847	944	995	814	977	1,305	552	†1,073	†1,301	2,254
St. Helens	*896	179	480	202	240	277	360	397	704	658	901
Sefton	*2,115	841	188	317	358	512	522	426	517	1,965	2,938
Wirral	2,997	1,086	588	617	531	750	998	895	1,091	2,325	2,241

* Including estimated apportionment of grants approved by predecessor authorities in the first quarter 1974.

† Figures based on incomplete returns.

Notes:

(a) Including grants to housing associations under private owner legislation. From fourth quarter 1980 including a small number of grants to tenants in public and private sectors.

(b) Conversion and improvement, intermediate, special and repair grants; also standard grants up to 1977. Grants approved up to 1977; grants paid from 1978.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Private Water Supplies (Diseases)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of outbreaks of water-borne diseases associated with private water supplies in each of the last 10 years, giving the type of disease, the number of persons involved, and the source of supply.

Mr. Whitney: Information is available only for the last five years and is as follows:

Year	*Disease*	*Number of Persons*	*Source*
1980	Gastroenteritis	Several hundred	4 bore holes (near Leeds)
	Gastroenteritis	160	Holiday Camp (Somerset)
1981	Gastroenteritis	Not known	Youth Hostel (Peak District)
1984	Gastroenteritis	30 guests plus unknown number of staff	Hotel (Cumbria)
	Gastroenteritis	Not known	Primary School (Lake District)

Hospital Pharmaceutical Service

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on manpower in the hospital pharmaceutical service.

Mr. Hayhoe: There were 3,209 (whole-time equivalent) pharmacists in the hospital service in England at 30 September 1984.

I am aware of recruitment difficulties in the basic grade in some areas and I understand that the management side of the Pharmaceutical Whitley council has indicated to the staff side that it would wish to see the settlement of the current pay claim weighted in favour of the pay of basic grade pharmacists who represent about one third of the total. The council is due to meet again on 8 November to continue negotiations.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of kidney transplants in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of cadaver kidney transplant operations performed in the United Kingdom in each of the past five years, as reported to the United Kingdom transplant service, were as follows:

	Numbers
1980	988
1981	905
1982	1,070
1983	1,144
1984	1,443

The Government launched a campaign in February 1984 to increase public awareness of the benefits of organ transplantation and to promote the donor card scheme, and the encouraging increase in kidney transplant operations performed in 1984 reflects the success of this campaign. Consideration is being given to how the momentum of the campaign might be maintained.

Local Authority Associations (Consultations)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the ground rules circulated within his Department to ensure adequate consultation with the local authority associations in the light of the judgment in R *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Mr. Newton: No ground rules have been circulated.

Health Care Provision

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to establish a statutory national inspectorate to monitor health care provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. Our Department monitors the National Health Service in a whole range of ways, including approval of regional health authorities' plans and review of performance. In addition the Health Advisory Service, while not an inspectorate, operates independently to help maintain and improve patient care in services for mentally ill and elderly people. The national development team for mentally handicapped people serves a similar function.

NHS (Complaints Procedure)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many investigations of complaints under the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunals) Regulations 1974 have been carried out in each of the last three years; in how many cases in each of those years there has been a request for an oral hearing; and in how many cases the request has been granted.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the form requested. The hon. Member may, however, find the following information helpful.

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Number of service committees complaints formally investigated	1,395	1,313	1,496
Number of appeals and representations made against the decision of the family practitioner committee	189	245	201
Decisions announced following oral hearings	70	59	55

Silentnight Ltd.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the National Health Service has purchased any beds from Silentnight Ltd. in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Silentnight is not a supplier under the central contract for the provision of mattresses to the National Health Service. Information about health authorities' purchases outside the contract is not held centrally.

Social Workers (Assaults)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of social workers assaulted in the course of their duty in each year since 1979 in respect of which assaults the alleged assailant was subsequently charged with *(a)* causing actual bodily harm, *(b)* causing grievous bodily harm, *(c)* wounding with intent, *(d)* manslaughter and *(e)* murder, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Snapethorpe Hospital, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his officials have had any recent discussions with the officials of the Yorkshire regional health authority or the officials of the Wakefield area health authority about the future of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Officials have held discussions with Yorkshire regional health authority officials both at my request and also as part of the normal process of assessing the regional strategic plan which was recently submitted.

A possible use that has been suggested locally for Snapethorpe hospital is as a geriatric hospital, and it is in this context that officials have had discussions. I understand that the two health authorities are presently carrying out a full appraisal of the available options for the developments of geriatric services. The results of this exercise are expected later in the year. The health authority will then be better able to make proposals as to the future of Snapethorpe hospital.

Benefit Uprating

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what period of increase in the retail price index the July 1986 benefit uprating will be based.

Mr. Newton: The July 1986 uprating will be based on the movement in the retail price index during the period from May 1985 to January 1986.

Heating Costs (Burnley)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* any housing estates in the Burnley borough council area designated by him as having abnormally high heat costs in accordance with the Supplementary Benefit (Requirement) Regulations, schedule 4, paragraph 11.

Mr. Major: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to paragraph 6 of schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations, which allows a special rate of supplementary benefit heating addition where the home is part of an estate built with a heating system recognised by the Secretary of State as having disproportionately high running costs. No heating systems in the Burnley borough council area have been so recognised.

Pharmacists

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to introduce legislation to implement the recent agreement on a new contract for pharmacists reached with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, what form the legislation will take, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government remain fully committed to the recent agreements on a new National Health Service contract for community pharmacists and intend introducing the legislation necessary to control entry to the pharmaceutical list at the earliest possible opportunity. Any new legislation will cover both the agreements reached in England and Wales and those in Scotland and Northern Ireland. I cannot at the moment predict when it will be possible to introduce such legislation.

Home Help Schemes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which local authorities have used joint funding to establish intensive home help schemes for elderly people being discharged from hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not held centrally. Details of a number of intensive home help schemes, many involving joint finance, are given in the research report "A Sourcebook of Innovations in the Community Care of the Elderly" published by the personal social services research unit at the university of Kent in November 1982. Age Concern England has also published a collection of projects related to mental health in old age, some of which involve home support services funded through joint finance. Two of the pilot projects in the programme established as part of the care in the community initiative involve the use of specially trained home care assistants to provide care to elderly long stay patients leaving hospital. These projects at Winchester and Darlington are being supported from centrally reserved joint finance funds.

General Practitioner-related Ancillary Staff Scheme

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* any abuses known to his Department of the single-handed rural general practitioner-related ancillary staff scheme since its inception.

Mr. Hayhoe: None are known.

Data Protection

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 22 July, *Official Report*, column *400*, if he will make a further statement on his review of the arrangements for preserving confidentiality in all computerised systems in the light of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Major: We are now well advanced in the process of identifying all the computer systems within the Department which contain personal data and preparing arrangements for registration under the Data Protection Act, and steps have been taken to ensure compliance with the data protection principles. Security officers have been designated for all major data processing projects and installations, and guidance on security standards for computer systems is being prepared. All staff in the Department have been given information about the requirements of the Act, including a reminder of the need to preserve the confidentiality of personal information.

Further information and training will be tailored to the needs of the particular groups of staff handling personal data.

Widows

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensions are being paid to widows residing in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, of men who worked in the United Kingdom and contributed to the national insurance scheme.

Mr. Major: The number of women living in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan receiving national insurance widow's benefit on 2 April 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, was 210, 381 and 951 respectively. Some of the 2,587 retirement pensioners in India, the 1,139 in Bangladesh, and 3,145 in Pakistan will be widows receiving pensions on their late husbands' insurance, but we are unable to identify these separately.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for widows' pensions are currently with his Department from widows residing in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Mr. Major: The overseas branch of the Department is currently dealing with 33 widows' benefit claims from widows in India, 171 from widows in Pakistan and 290 from widows in Bangladesh.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures his Department has taken to inform and communicate with widows residing in the Indian sub-continent about their entitlement to national insurance widows' pensions.

Mr. Major: If details of a wife are held at the time of the death of a male beneficiary, a claim form is sent to the widow wherever she is. In addition special arrangements have been made with the State bank of India and the Sonali bank in Bangladesh to help widows to make claims and to obtain the necessary documentary evidence which is required. Although it has not been possible to make the same arrangements with the Habib bank in Pakistan, it acts as paying agents and gives limited assistance to claimants. The Department also co-operates with representatives of claimants where there are language difficulties. Leaflet FB2, "Which Benefit", is now available in Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

Women (Retirement Pension)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women, in each year from 1979 to 1984, claimed a retirement pension based on contributions paid or credited for the period before 5 July 1948; and how many of these claims were followed by an award of pension based (i) entirely on contributions paid or credited for the period before July 1948 and (ii) partly on such contributions; and in each case what was the average pension awarded.

Mr. Major: There is no central statistical analysis of claimants' insurance records which would indicate the specific periods of the working life during which contributions accrued on which title to retirement pension is based.

I regret therefore that the information requested is not available.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for family income supplement following the miners' strike have *(a)* been referred to tribunal, *(b)* been heard, *(c)* remain to be heard and *(d)* have been determined: (i) in favour and (ii) against the appellant, in each Department of Health and Social Security region.

Mr. Newton: Appeals against the disallowance of a claim to family income supplement made by families of striking miners were recorded from 4 July 1984. Since then 959 claims from striking miners have been referred to the social security appeal tribunals. Of these 517 have been heard, 357 have been withdrawn by the claimant at the hearing and 85 are still outstanding. Of the claims heard, 27 were allowed and 490 were disallowed by the tribunal. The 27 cases allowed were referred to the commissioner. Figures are not available on a regional basis.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many striking miners' families made claims for family income supplement during the 1984-85 strike; and how many of these claims were met.

Mr. Newton: From September 1984, when separate records were kept, there were around 2,700 claims to family income supplement from families of striking miners. All were disallowed.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be publishing the 1983 statistics for social security benefits.

Mr. Major: 1983 statistics on many social security benefits were included in "Social Security Statistics 1984". 1983 statistics on most other benefits will be included in the next volume of "Social Security Statistics" planned for publication in the spring of 1986.

In addition copies of the full set of tabulated figures from the 1983 supplementary benefit annual statistical inquiry will be deposited in the Library and made available from the DHSS leaflets unit at the end of November 1985.

Hospital Services (Chesterfield)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the occupancy rate of beds at the new hospital in Chesterfield.

Mr. Whitney: Beds in the new Chesterfield and North Derbyshire royal hospital were first opened on 29 April 1984. During that year, and into 1985, as beds were brought into use, there were further openings. For the period from 1 January to 31 December 1984, the period covered by data so far submitted to the Department, an average of 293 beds were recorded as available daily: the average number occupied was 175, giving an occupancy rate of 60 per cent.

Dental Fillings

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make non-mercury-amalgam dental fillings available to National Health Service patients for fillings in any type of tooth.

Mr. Hayhoe: Dental filling materials other than amalgam, including gold, porcelain, silicate, glass ionomer and silico-phosphate cements, together with resin based composite materials are already available for the restoration of teeth within the general dental service of the National Health Service. Most of these materials are either unsuitable or are insufficiently tested for normal use in restoring cavities of all types in all teeth; their use for certain fillings therefore in exceptional circumstances, where amalgam may in the clinical judgment of the dentist be inappropriate, requires the prior approval of the Dental Estimates Board.

Notifiable Communicable Diseases

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is *(a)* the number and category of suspected and confirmed cases of notifiable communicable diseases, *(b)* the number of special beds designated and their location and *(c)* the number of registered fever nurses or their successors employed in the National Health Service, for each district and regional health authority in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Whitney: Data on notifications of communicable diseases for each Regional Health Authority are published in annual volumes of "Communicable Disease Statistics" for the years 1979 to 1983 and its predecessor "Statistics of Infectious Diseases" for the years 1974 to 1978. Copies of these publications are held in the Library. Numbers of suspected cases are not routinely aggregated. The information is not available at district health authority level.

Information about the number of beds available in the specialities of infectious diseases and tropical medicine and the number of registered fever nurses is given in the tables. The register of fever nurses has been closed since 1967. Some registered general nurses undertake special post-basic training in this area but information on the number of staff thus qualified is not held centrally.

Average number of daily available infectious disease and tropical medicine beds in NHS hospitals in England*

Region†	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	**1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*†1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern	143	152	137	122	131	111	97	72	64	63	49
Yorkshire	360	321	281	248	240	235	218	213	203	184	178
Trent	186	189	187	173	176	125	110	109	101	90	88
East Anglian	99	96	95	101	91	85	95	74	66	65	49
North West Thames	249	251	232	144	158	152	121	117	115	107	70
North East Thames	312	313	291	266	222	261	233	226	203	196	194
South East Thames	236	224	155	134	133	112	96	89	85	73	62
South West Thames	143	85	94	71	68	66	69	68	64	68	66
Wessex	111	105	99	104	88	71	61	57	53	52	55
Oxford	50	52	42	42	34	34	34	34	26	25	23
South Western	93	90	94	86	85	68	60	61	51	51	48
West Midlands	289	262	240	239	215	200	189	186	185	167	156
Mersey	177	173	173	169	157	140	110	110	123	97	47
North Western	250	261	227	219	218	181	170	135	123	114	101
Special Health Authorities and Boards of Governors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
England	2,698	2,574	2,347	2,118	2,016	1,840	1,662	1,551	1,461	1,351	1,184

* Tropical medicine was not a separately identified specialty until 1979 and hence, figures prior to this year are for infectious disease beds only.
† Because of NHS restructuring in 1982 the regional figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period.

NHS registered fever nurses at 30 September

Region	*Whole-time equivalent**				
	†1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern	13	13	13	14	15
Yorkshire	0	6	5	4	4
Trent	5	4	2	2	2
East Anglian	1	1	2	5	5
North West Thames	0	1	2	2	3
North East Thames	4	5	5	7	3
South East Thames	5	5	4	3	3
South West Thames	2	2	1	1	1
Wessex	2	2	3	3	4
Oxford	0	0	0	1	1
South Western	3	3	2	1	1
West Midlands	3	4	4	3	2
Mersey	2	2	2	2	2
North Western	9	9	10	9	8
Special Health Authorities and Boards of Governors	0	0	0	0	0
England	48	56	56	56	53

* Owing to rounding the sum of the component figures may not agree with the total.
† The number of nurses qualified at this level were not separately identified prior to 1980.

"Health for All" Strategy

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to district health authorities, local authorities and any other relevant organisations on policy towards implementation of the World Health Organisation's health for all strategy in relation to each of its six major themes.

Mr. Hayhoe: We are considering how the World Health Organisation's strategy for achieving health for all may best be drawn to the attention of the National Health Service and other interested authorities and organisations.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make public the two-yearly monitoring reports, from 1983 onwards, and six yearly evaluations of progress, from 1985 onwards, which the Government submit to the regional committee of the World Health Organisation and WHA in furtherance of the World Health Organisation's health for all strategy.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have today placed in the Library, along with the relevant questionnaires, copies of the two reports—the 1983 monitoring report and the 1985 evaluation report—so far submitted on behalf of the United Kingdom to the European regional office of the World Health Organisation. The first six-yearly evaluation report is not due until 1991.

Park Hospital, North Derbyshire

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the limits on free time, in terms of when and for how long it lasts, for consultants categorised as maximum part-time consultants at Park hospital, north Derbyshire; if he will list the sessions these surgeons undertake for the National Health Service, by day and time; whether these consultants' free time private sessions ever overlap with their National Health Service sessions; and whether any checks are made as to whether these surgeons are fulfilling their National Health Service contracts.

Mr. Hayhoe: We do not collect centrally such detailed information. The hon. Member may therefore wish to make inquiries of the chairman of the Trent regional health authority.

Day Care

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the number of day care places in (i) day centres for the elderly and (ii) local authority residential homes for the elderly, *(b)* the rate per thousand population and *(c)* the percentage change of day care places for people over 75 years and between 60 and 75 years, respectively, for each of the years 1978 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Whitney: The available information on the number of day care places for the elderly for the years 1978 to 1984 is given in the table: data for 1985 are not yet available. Further details are given in the Department's booklet "Adult Training Centres for the Mentally Handicapped and Day Centres for the Mentally Ill, the Elderly and the Younger Physically Handicapped (at 31 March)", copies of which are available in the Library. It is not possible to give figures separately for age groups over or below the age of 75.

Day care places for elderly

England

As at 31 March	*Places in Day Centres*	*Places in Residential Homes*	*Total**	*Annual Percentage Change*	*Places per 1,000 Population aged 65+*
1978	17,533	6,631	24,164		3·6
1979	18,889	7,294	26,183	+8·4	3·8
1980	19,988	7,228	27,216	+3·9	3·9
1981	20,723	7,771	28,494	+4·7	4·0
1982	21,489	8,223	29,712	+4·3	4·2
1983	21,069	8,290	29,359	−1·2	4·1
1984	21,492	8,745	30,237	+3·0	4·3

* The data do not include the growing number of places in 'mixed' day centres, of which an unspecified number are for the elderly.

Homoeopathy

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the total expenditure in each region of the National Health Service on homoeopathy in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally. Health authorities' annual accounts submitted to the Department do not distinguish between expenditure on homoeopathy and expenditure on other forms of treatment.

Disabled Persons (Rehabilitation)

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision exists for higher level training for health professionals, for example at universities, aimed at identifying need and providing for the rehabilitation of the disabled.

Mr. Hayhoe: Doctors wishing to specialise in rehabilitation medicine will have completed a period of postgraduate training before entering a four-year period of higher training which combines clinical, teaching, organisational and administrative experience. Doctors in other specialties may also train in rehabilitation.

Instruction for trainee general practitioners is given during vocational training including during their day release course. Regional advisers in general practice and organisers of continuing education courses for GPs are developing the concept of multi-disciplinary learning for trainees and for established principals. Courses of this type

are also being organised by the department of general practice at Exeter university. These courses involve nurses and therapists.

The English National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting approves a number of post-registration courses concerned with rehabilitation. In addition occupational health nurses have a rehabilitation component as an integral part of the course which leads to the OHN certificate approved by the Royal College of Nursing.

As regards the remedial professions, the professional bodies run post-basic courses. There are opportunities for members of these professions to undertake remedial studies as part of post-graduate courses at Southampton university, at the Polytechnic of Central London and Lanchester college, Coventry. The education development unit for the remedial professions, under the aegis of the National Health Service Training Authority, promotes the development of on-going education.

Child Care

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what discussions he has had with local authorities and voluntary organisations about joint funding for the care of children who have left mental hospitals;

(2) in what percentage of cases children who are released from mental hospitals return to the parental or family home;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that full and adequate community care is provided for children who are released from mental hospitals;

(4) under which health authorities the children who leave mental hospitals are reviewed for their health, social service and educational needs;

(5) how many children have been admitted to mental hospitals in each of the last five years; and if he will name the hospitals and their locations;

(6) if he will list the record for each regional health authority, in each of the past five years, of releasing children from mental hospitals;

(7) what are the numbers of children in each of the last five years who have ceased to be included in statistics as children in mental hospitals because they reached the age of 16 years;

(8) what has been the change over the last five years in the number of children under the age of 16 years who are in mental hospitals;

(9) how many children under the age of 16 years are in mental hospitals with 25 or more beds; if he will name the hospitals and their locations; and if he will make a statement;

(10) on what date he estimates that all children will be removed from long-stay mental handicap hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about his review of child care law; what changes he envisages in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The review of child care law which was the report to Ministers of an inter-departmental working party was published on 4 October as a consultative document. We have asked for comments by 15 January 1986 and will then decide what action to take.

Erith and District Hospital

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received to date on the future of Erith and District hospital.

Mr. Whitney: None.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will introduce legislation to compensate for loss of pension those unemployed persons taking a reduced early pension in consequence of the supplementary benefit notional resources regulations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of unemployed persons in receipt of supplementary benefit, whose benefit is reduced because they have an entitlement to an early reduced pension from a former employer;

(3) how many submissions have been made to his headquarters from local offices in respect of deductions in supplementary benefit to unemployed persons who have a choice of a reduced early pension from a former employer.

Mr. Major: Regulation 4(2)*(a)* of the Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Regulations (SI 1981/1527) provides that any resource which would become available to a member of the assessment unit upon application duly being made, but which has not been acquired by him may if, in the opinion of the adjudication officer it is reasonable in the circumstances to do so, be treated as if it were possessed by him. Information on the number of persons to whom this provision has been applied because of entitlement to an early reduced pension is not available. Our headquarters received one submission on the matter in 1981 and I understand that the office of the Chief Adjudication Officer has in recent weeks given guidance to a local office in an individual case. We have no plans at present either to amend the existing law or to introduce legislation providing for compensation in such cases.

Supplementary Benefit (Greenock)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for those offices covering the Greenock travel-to-work area, what is the total number of unemployed people claiming supplementary benefit during the last month for which figures are available; and what are the figures for the comparable month in 1984;

(2) for those offices covering the Greenock travel-to-work area, what is the total number of supplementary benefit appeals registered during the last month for which statistics are available;

(3) for those offices covering the Greenock travel-to-work area, what is the total number of supplementary benefit claimants for the last month for which statistics are available and the figure for the comparable month in 1984.

Mr. Major: The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from the four local offices serving the Greenock travel-to-work area are set out in the following table:

	July 1985		July 1984	
	Unemployed Claimants	All Claimants	Unemployed Claimants	All Claimants
Greenock	4,280	11,101	4,100	10,748
Port Glasgow	2,189	5,006	2,068	4,723
Paisley	7,779	17,242	7,508	16,411
Johnstone	3,729	7,917	3,790	7,863

Source: 100% count of cases in action.

The number of supplementary benefits appeals registered during the four-week period up to 24 September 1985 was:

	Number
Greenock	59
Port Glasgow	12
Paisley	104
Johnstone	28

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of experience of the operation of the limited list over the past six months, he will now update the projected annual savings in cost to the National Health Service expected to arise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The limited information so far available is generally in line with the forecast annual saving of £75 millions.

Benefits (Statutory Instruments)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many statutory instruments concerned with benefits, other than supplementary benefit and unemployment benefit, were laid in each of the years 1980 to 1984; how many have been laid so far in 1985; and what is the annual cost of printing them.

Mr. Major: The information in the form requested is as follows:

Year	Statutory Instruments (SIs)
1980	14
1981	10
1982	19
1983	21
1984	24
1985 so far	13

The cost of printing SIs is borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office which recovers the costs itself.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many statutory instruments concerned with supplementary benefit were laid in each of the years 1980 to 1984; how many have been laid so far in 1985; and what is the annual cost of printing them.

Mr. Major: The information in the form requested is as follows:

Year	Statutory Instruments (SIs)
1980	15
1981	12
1982	8
1983	11
1984	7
1985 so far	6

The cost of printing SIs is borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office which recovers the costs itself.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many statutory instruments concerned with unemployment benefit were laid in each of the years 1980 to 1984; how many have been laid so far in 1985; and what is the annual cost of printing them.

Mr. Major: The information in the form requested is as follows:

Year	Statutory Instruments (SIs)
1980	NIL
1981	2
1982	3
1983	1
1984	1
1985 so far	NIL

The cost of printing SIs is borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office which recovers the costs itself.

Leeds Health Authorities (Revenue Allocations)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out at 1982 prices the revenue allocations for *(a)* Leeds western district health authority and *(b)* Leeds eastern district health authority for 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: Revenue allocation to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to seek information from the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what efforts are being made by his Department to notify people presently entitled to severe disablement allowance and new claimants of their full entitlements and of possible extra benefits available because of needs arising from their disabilities.

Mr. Newton: We are currently carrying out a national advertising campaign directed at encouraging claims from people who are phased in to the benefit at the end of November. This reinforces a similar campaign last year aimed at people included at the start of the benefit. The explanatory leaflet accompanying the claim form includes information about the other benefits available to handicapped people. Details of some of these benefits are also given in our handbook "Non-contributory Benefits for disabled people", a new edition of which is in preparation.

Departmental Office, Huyton

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of hours of overtime worked in the Huyton office of his Department in each of the last five years and to date in 1985.

Mr. Major: The hours of overtime worked in the Huyton office are as follows:

Year	Hours
1981-82	4,508
1982-83	9,996
1983-84	2,237
1984-85	10,640

The overtime hours worked from 10 April 1985 to 24 September 1985 (the latest date for which accounts are held) are 12,950.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the annual cost of the overtime worked in each of the last five years and to date in 1985 in constant terms in the Huyton office of his Department.

Mr. Major: The annual cost in constant terms of overtime worked in Huyton office in each of the last five years and to date in 1985 is as follows:

Year	Cost (£)
1981-82	31,544
1982-83	69,934
1983-84	15,646
1984-85	74,441

The cost of overtime from 10 April 1985 to 24 September 1985, the latest date for which accounts are held, is £90,605.

These figures are based on 1984-85 average costs of overtime in the Department.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the reduction in personnel in the Huyton office of his Department over the last three years; and what savings have resulted from the reduction in staff.

Mr. Major: Information is available only for the last two years. On 1 April 1983 there were 160 staff in post, on 1 April 1985 the corresponding figure was 153.

The seven posts resulted in a saving of £51,576 based on 1984-85 average salaries costs.

Rates

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the response of local authorities to his proposal to enforce a requirement to pay 20 per cent. of the rates bill.

Mr. Newton: Over 400 local authorities commented on many aspects of the Green Paper proposals. Their responses are still being analysed.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether exceptionally severe weather payments will be available during the winter of 1985-86; and if he will make a statement on the changes he proposes as a result of the experience of the winter of 1984-85.

Mr. Newton: We hope to make an announcement shortly, taking account of last winter's experience.

Child Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to uprate child benefit in 1986.

Mr. Newton: The rate of child benefit from the next general uprating in July 1986 will be determined at the appropriate time.

Social Security Review

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many individuals have signed petitions or postcards addressed to him in response to the proposals of his social security reviews.

Mr. Newton: About 128,000.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if loans paid from his proposed social fund are to be deductible from child benefit and pensions as well as from supplementary benefits.

Mr. Newton: Detailed proposals in these and other respects are still under consideration in the light of comments made in the consultation period on the Green Paper. Our conclusions will be set out in the White Paper.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he plans with interested parties after the publication of his White Paper on the social security reviews.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper will contain the Government's major decisions on the reform of social security. The legislation to give effect to the White Paper will be fully debated in Parliament. In addition we shall consult interested bodies as necessary on the details of change.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the calculations of the consultants' report on the additional staff numbers that will have to be recruited on a temporary basis to administer the new benefit system proposed in his Green Paper on the reviews.

Mr. Newton: We shall consider this when the final decisions on proposals for the reform of social security have been taken.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing, in percentages, the responses in favour and against, the main recommendations of his social security Green Paper;

(2) if he will list those organisations which supported his proposals to *(a)* abolish the state earnings-related pension scheme, *(b)* create a social fund, *(c)* abolish heating additions, *(d)* abolish the death grant, *(e)* abolish the maternity grant and *(f)* impose a 20 per cent. rates requirement on supplementary benefit claimants.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply at column *129* on 22 October.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many organisations and individuals responded during the consultation period of his social security reviews.

Mr. Newton: Over 7,000.

Radio Therapy (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of radiotherapy units which have been closed in National Health Service hospitals in the west midlands region since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to seek information from the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority.

Maternity Allowance

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to amend the regulations relating to the maternity allowance to permit a woman who is widowed during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth to receive maternity allowance.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about changes in the regulations governing the payment of maternity allowances to women widowed during pregnancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have at present no proposals to change the rules which prevent the simultaneous payment to the same person of two benefits intended for personal maintenance. However, a number of representations on the point raised by my hon. Friend have recently been received, mainly arising from a resolution passed by the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds. The National Union has itself written to me about it, referring to the social security review, and its representations will accordingly be considered alongside other suggestions made in the course of consultation on the Green Paper.

St. Luke's Hospital, Bradford

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when it is envisaged that construction of the new St. Luke's hospital in Bradford will commence.

Mr. Whitney: The Yorkshire regional health authority is planning to commence construction of the new St. Luke's hospital in Bradford in 1988.

Dental Charges

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will extend the exemption from dental charges to those women who have borne a child in such a way that the exemption period for dental treatment extends to the end of the month in which the child's first birthday falls;

(2) if he will introduce a special item into the dental fee scale to pay for preventive advice for expectant and nursing mothers concerning the care of children's teeth and the prevention of dental disease;

(3) if he will remove the prior approval conditions under items 3 and 5 of the dental fee scale for pregnant women and for those who have borne a child within the previous 12 months;

(4) if he has any plans to extend exemptions from dental charges to women who become pregnant during a course of dental treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the trend in the size of the income tax base in real terms in the past decade, after taking account of the costs of all reliefs against income tax.

Mr. Moore: The estimates below are of the movement (at constant prices) of the total taxable income of individuals less deductions and personal allowances. Figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are provisional.

Year	*Index (1975-76 = 100)*
1975-76	100·0
1976-77	99·3
1977-78	89·7
1978-79	102·3
1979-80	104·4
1980-81	102·1
1981-82	103·1
1982-83	103·0
1983-84	105·5
1984-85	102·3

"Official Report" (Price)

Mr. Thornton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the price of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Gow: Following a review by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, I have authorised an increase of 55p in the price of the daily part, with corresponding increases in the prices of weekly parts, indexes, Standing Committee debates, bound volumes and subscription rates. The scale of charges for reprints of Members' speeches appearing in the *Official Report* will also be raised. Despite these increases *Hansard* will still receive a substantial subsidy.

Capital Allowances (Factories and Workshops)

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to re-establish the 100 per cent. capital allowance for the building of factories or workshops of up to 1,000 sq ft.

Mr. Moore: I have no plans to do so.

VAT (Housing Improvements)

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total receipts collected by his Department from the value added tax on housing improvements in the last fiscal year.

Mr. Gow: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on recent reports on the likely trends of unemployment in the United Kingdom during 1986, contained in documents issued by the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 29 October 1985

ENVIRONMENT

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will seek to deter seagulls from the Terrace of the Houses of Parliament, and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to expedite the removal of seagull droppings from the Terrace of the Houses of Parliament, and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Unfortunately, my right hon. Friend has no powers of control over visits to the Terrace of uninvited birds, whether seagulls or any other variety. Such visitors have been unusually prolific this year, perhaps due to the improved catering facilities, the hospitality of Members, or the declining prospects over the river at County Hall. The normal cleaning arrangements have been adjusted to cope with the additional burden falling on them.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost of cleaning the fabric of the Houses of Parliament since 1979.

Sir George Young: The programme of stonework repair, restoration and conservation began in July 1981. Costs of each phase so far are as follows:

		£
Phase I	New Palace Yard	293,700
Phase II	House of Lords, West Front	761,000
Phase III	Speaker's Green	614,000
Phase IV	Clock Tower	*1,750,000
Phase V	Terrace	*1,800,000

*Estimated

Furan and Dioxins

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any information about the potential production of dioxins or furans during the combustion of polyvinyl chloride materials in municipal refuse incinerators; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are conflicting views about the role of the various potential chlorine sources, including polyvinyl chloride, in the formation of trace quantities of dioxins and furans during the complex combustion processes taking place in municipal refuse incinerators. However, investigations are currently being carried out by the Warren Spring Laboratory, designed amongst other things to test the content of dioxins and furans in the flue gases from municipal incinerators.

Polychlorinated Biphenyl Wastes

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any plans to bring up to date and correct waste management paper No. 6 on polychlorinated biphenyl wastes.

Mrs. Rumbold: While the general guidance given in this paper still holds good, work on a second edition is already in hand in order to reflect current United Kingdom and international knowledge, and to strengthen the guidance on disposal of PCB wastes. Publication will be in the first half of 1986.

Grant-related Expenditure Assessments

Mr. Lightbown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about grant-related expenditure assessments for local authorities in England in 1986-87.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In response to requests from the local authority associations and many individual authorities, I have sent to all local authorities in England details of their provisional GREs for 1986-87. Copies have been placed in the Library and in the Vote Office. For the first time this provides them with information about GREs some six weeks in advance of the RSG settlement.

Council House Sales

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council house tenants have bought their own home since the introduction of right-to-buy legislation; of these figures how many bought were flats; and if he will break down these figures by region and also give the figures for Leicester.

Sir George Young: Between October 1980 and June 1985 an estimated 482,400 right-to-buy sales were completed by local authorities and new towns in England, including 16,300 flats. Corresponding figures reported by Leicester city council were 3,907 houses and eight flats.

I am placing in the Library the regular table showing sales by individual local authorities by region. This includes numbers of dwellings sold under the right to buy and total flats sold since April 1979, including voluntary sales.

Solarite House, Wednesbury

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the urban development grant made concerning Solarite house, Wednesbury, Birmingham, met the appropriate criteria.

Sir George Young: I wrote to my hon. Friend about this case on 23 September.

Community Trade Mark Office

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the Property Services Agency portfolio of central London buildings and nominate a site for the proposed Community Trade Mark office.

Sir George Young: I shall be assisting my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in reviewing and assessing all the potential sites

for the proposed Community Trade Mark office, including any suitable ones within the Property Services Agency's portfolio.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to provide finance to objectors and to county councils at public inquiries on nuclear waste dumping proposals.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not Government policy to give financial aid to local authorities and objectors at public inquiries of this nature.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether sanctions and penalties on council spending will be incurred by special expenditure by councils in relation to public inquiries into nuclear waste dumping proposals.

Mrs. Rumbold: The system of expenditure targets and grant holdback will be abandoned from the financial year 1986-87, and so will not apply to any expenditure of this nature. However, the general constraints of the block grant machinery will continue to apply to revenue spending by local authorities, including expenditure on public inquiries.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) in what way and at what stage he intends to consult the National Radiological Protection Board on NIREX's proposals for nuclear waste dumps;

(2) in what way and at what stage he intends to consult the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on NIREX's proposals for nuclear waste dumps;

(3) if he will publish the principles by which schemes for nuclear waste dumps will be assessed by him under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Radiological Protection Board and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee have already been consulted on the principles to be applied in considering any projects for disposal facilities for low and intermediate level wastes. These principles have already been published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in the document "Disposal Facilities on Land for Low and Intermediate-Level Radioactive Wastes: Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment". In addition, the board has published its own guidance on assessing the acceptability of sites for disposal. It is not the current intention to consult the board or the committee on specific projects. These would fall to be considered at a public inquiry in the light of the published principles.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how it is proposed to deposit or store, in the long term, the volume of intermediate-level waste currently stored in a temporary repository at Harwell.

Mrs. Rumbold: Radioactive waste packaged for deep ocean disposal in 1983 remains in a dry storage building at Harwell. A decision on its disposal has been deferred pending the results of the study by the Department of the best practicable disposal options for this and other low and intermediate-level wastes.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the effect on the volume of radioactive waste produced in the United Kingdom of the eventual decommissioning of the United Kingdom civil reactor programme.

Mrs. Rumbold: The inventory of radioactive wastes kept jointly by my Department and NIREX includes decommissioning wastes estimated to arise up to the year 2029. The relevant figures, which are published in the annual reports of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, are based on the CEGB estimates for decommissioning typical Magnox and AGR power stations.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when and by what means he intends to announce the proposed sites which NIREX wishes to investigate as possibly suitable for the disposal of short lived and medium term nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1985, c. 255]: NIREX has told me that it is making good progress towards a final list of possible sites. It should be possible for it to announce candidate sites for detailed geological investigation before the end of the year. It is in everyone's interest that delay should be kept to a minimum. It is also in everyone's interest that the best possible sites are chosen.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and their qualifications and indicate how often it meets.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee holds one-day meetings five times a year and normally undertakes one visit a year to installations of interest. Current members and their qualifications are as follows:

Chairman:

Professor Paul T. Matthews, CBE, MA, PhD, FRS

Independent members:

Lady Anglesey, DBE, LLD

Professor Roger J. Berry, D.Phil, MD, FRCP,FRCR, Professor of Oncology, Middlesex Hospital Medical School

Wilfred Cassidy, BSc, MChem, A CChem, FRSC, AMCT, Scientific adviser, Public Analyst and Official Agriculture Analyst, Somerset County Council

Professor George M. Dunnet, DSc, PhD — Regis Professor of Natural History, University of Aberdeen

Sir Leslie Fowden, PhD, FRS — Director of Rothamsted Experimental Station

Professor John R. Greening, PhD, DSc, FInstP, FRSE — Professor of Medical Physics, University of Edinburgh

Dr. Michael H. Martin, BSc, PhD — Senior Lecturer in Botany, University of Bristol

Professor Geoffrey Rose, DM, DSc, FRCP, FFCM — Professor of Epidemiology, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Professor David R. Williams, BSc, PhD, DSc, CChem, FRSC, FRSA, Professor of Applied Chemistry, University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology

The nuclear and electricity industries:

Dr. R. H. Flowers, BSc, PhD—Direct of Fuel Processing UKAEA; Member of NIREX Directorate

Roy R. Matthews, MA, CEng, FIMechE, FIFE, FIChemE — Director of Health and Safety, Central Electricity Board; Member of NIREX Directorate

Derek R. Smith, MA, FEng, FIMechE, MIEE — Director of Engineering National Nuclear Corporation Ltd.

Dr. William L. Wilkinson, MA, PhD, ScD(Cantab),

FIChemE, FEng — Technical Director, British Nuclear Fuels plc; Member of NIREX Directorate

Trade Unions

Dr. Jack Abernethy, BSc, PhD — Member of the Institute of Professional Civil Servants, British Nuclear Fuels plc

Peter N. Adams, MBE — National Officer, Electrical Electronic Telecommunications and Plumbing Union

Richard B. Pepper, BSc, MInstP — Member of the Electrical Power Engineers Association and Principal Health Physicist, Central Electricity Generating Board

David O. Williams — General Secretary, Confederation of Health Service Employees

Special Development Order Procedure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how often and in what years the special development order procedure has been used.

Mr. Tracey: The numbers of special development orders made in England and Wales since 1947 is as follows:

	Number
1950	3
1954	1
1956	3
1957	3
1958	3
1959	3
1960	1
1961	1
1963	1
1965	2
1977	2
1978	1
1981	3
1982	2
1985	2

Local Authorities (Legal Proceedings)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update his reply of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *174*, about local authorities which have commenced or have given notice of their intention to commence legal proceedings against him in respect of the administration of block grant, expenditure guidance and grant holdback whether by way of an action for judicial review, for a declaration or otherwise since 1 April 1981, summarising the grounds upon which the actions were stated to have been brought and, where appropriate, the outcome.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following is the information.

Authority	*Grounds*	*Outcome*
London Borough of Hackney	1984-85 expenditure guidance unlawful	Heard March 1984; application for judicial review dismissed; Hackney's appeal to Court of Appeal dismissed 2 May 1985; no further appeal.
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council	1985-86 guidance unlawful	Application dismissed on 15 March; Court of Appeal reversed decision on 3 October. House of Lords considering Respondent's appeal on 28 October.
Nottinghamshire County Council	1985-86 guidance unlawful	Application dismissed on 15 March; Court of Appeal reversed decision on 3 October. House of Lords considering Respondent's appeal on 28 October.
Derbyshire County Council	1985-86 guidance unlawful	Application dismissed on 15 March—no further appeal.
London Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham	Secretary of State misdirected himself in refusing disregard	Application allowed 9 May 1985.
London Borough of Lambeth	1984-85 guidance unlawful	Not proceeded with.
Newcastle City Council	Guidance for years 1983-84 to 1985-86 unlawful	Leave for judicial review granted; to be heard.

Urban Aid Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have received urban aid grants for the refurbishment of specific housing estates in the last three years.

Sir George Young: Six local authorities have received offers of urban development grant towards eight projects for the refurbishment or conversion of council housing for sale to owner-occupiers. Many of the authorities for the 48 districts designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 have also received urban programme grant towards additional facilities or environmental improvements on council estates. In addition, 12 community refurbishment schemes on council estates have been approved for urban programme grant.

Local Authority Information (Public Access)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of local authorities since the implementation of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act who have started to levy charges on members of the public wishing to inspect documents and if he will list those authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department does not collect information of the kind the hon. Member seeks.

Portsdown Park, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received an application from Portsmouth city council for a grant towards the refurbishment of the Portsdown Park housing estate.

Sir George Young: No. The leader of Portsmouth city council has written to my right hon. Friend recently asking whether a possible scheme for the refurbishment of the estate would qualify for urban development grant. I have replied to that letter today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Lear Fan Project

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the winding up of the Lear Fan project.

Dr. Boyson: It is unlikely that any substantial recoupment of the public funds invested in the Lear Fan project will be achieved by sale of physical assets owned by Lear Fan Ltd. in either the United States or in the United Kingdom. Such recoupment appears to be wholly dependant on the sale and subsequent successful development of the Lear Fan technology rights. The receiver of Lear Fan Ltd. (appointed by the Government), those who invested private funds in the project and the US trustee in bankruptcy are currently discussing the possibility of establishing a new company to market the technology rights.

The new company shareholding would be allocated on the basis of the investment made by the respective parties and the rights they hold in respect of the project. The US trustee in bankruptcy could decide to take out a shareholding in the new company. If so the Government, who even if a new company is formed will still be creditors of Lear Fan Ltd., would be entitled to a proportion of any benefits ultimately accruing to the trustee in respect of his shareholding in the new company. Formation of a new company will require the approval of the United States Bankruptcy Court.

The receiver has had some discussions with a consortium about the possible acquisition of the project; but there is no question of any further Government investment even if there are proposals to exploit the project within the United Kingdom.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the cases during the last three years in which a prison sentence imposed for a scheduled offence has been reduced under the prerogative, indicating the respective offences, sentences and reductions.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available in the form requested and it is not our practice to give details of release under the Royal prerogative of mercy. However, the numbers of persons released under the Royal prerogative of mercy since 1980 were published most recently in my reply to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), at columns *57-58*.

Teaching Staff (Higher Education)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teaching staff were employed in public sector higher education in Northern Ireland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The following figures, which relate to academic years, are approximate.

	Full-time	*Part-time*
1978-79	702	164
1979-80	712	142
1980-81	719	147
1981-82	723	135
1982-83	721	176
1983-84	712	175
1984-85	142	65

Note:

The Ulster polytechnic merged with New University of Ulster to form the University of Ulster on 1 October 1984. Academic staff of the two Northern Ireland universities are excluded.

Her Majesty's Prison, Armagh

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, in July, August and September, respectively, if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched, whether any prison contraband smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items, in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted, and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making an appearance at Armagh courthouse on remand, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Scott: During July 1985 a total of 28 searches were carried out on 22 prisoners; 16 prisoners were searched once and six were searched twice. During August 1985, there was a total of 25 searches carried out on 14 prisoners; three prisoners were searched once and 11 were searched twice. During September 1985, there were 21 searches carried out on 14 prisoners; nine prisoners were searched once, three prisoners were searched twice, and two prisoners were searched three times. No prohibited article was found during these searches and no prisoner refused to be searched. Searches were carried out in the following circumstances:

	July	*August*	*September*
First admission on remand and awaiting trial	6	2	5
First admission on sentence and final discharge	13	15	11
Attending Armagh Remand Court	1	—	—
Attending other Remand Courts	1	—	2
Bail Court appearance	3	2	—
Home Leave Scheme	3	4	2
Inter-Prison Visits	—	2	—
Visits to outside hospital	1	—	1
Total	28	25	21

Motorways (Road Works)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions during the last 12 months, the hard shoulder on the M2 and the M5 motorways out of Belfast has been used during road works or diversions, and of these, on how many occasions signs were placed to direct motorists to use the hard shoulder.

Mr. Needham: On one occasion, and appropriate signing was provided.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to require signs to be placed in future on motorways during road works at diversions to indicate to motorists that the hard shoulder may be used.

Mr. Needham: Where motorists are required to use the hard shoulder on motorways in Northern Ireland during roadworks or diversions, adequate signing will be provided.

TRANSPORT

Hillingdon

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultations he has had with London Regional Transport about the cost of constructing a new London Regional Transport station at Hillingdon as part of the blue scheme for the improvement of the A40 Western Avenue;

(2) whether any part of the cost of the new London Regional Transport station at Hillingdon is part of the blue scheme for the improvement of the A40 Western Avenue will fall on his Department's Vote.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department, through its consulting engineers for the A40 Long Lane road improvement scheme, has held preliminary meetings with London Underground Ltd. about the reconstruction of Hillingdon station.

The normal equivalent reinstatement basis of compensation will apply.

M25

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional contracts have been issued to the contractor and consultants responsible for the Wisley to Reigate section of the M25; and if he will list those projects.

Mrs. Chalker: Three contracts were let for the construction of the sections of the M25 between Wisley and Reigate:

(i) Leatherhead interchange—
Awarded to Balfour Beatty Ltd. on 14 June 1982 at £14·1 million.

(ii) Wisley-Leatherhead section—
Awarded to Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd. on 5 October 1982 at £15·4 million.

(iii) Leatherhead-Reigate section—
Awarded to Bovis Civil Engineering Ltd.* in consortium with Peter Birse Ltd. on 21 April 1983 at £14·6 million.

* On 9 November 1984 Bovis Civil Engineering Ltd. was purchased by the Farr Group Ltd. and the name changed to A. E. Farr Ltd.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the eventual length of the M25 and how many miles of the M25 are *(a)* floodlit and *(b)* have a crash barrier.

Mrs. Chalker: The eventual length of the actual M25 will be 117 miles excluding the Dartford tunnel and the approach roads. Approximately 40 miles are lit at present and safety fences are provided throughout the entire length of the open sections except for 1·8km between junctions 11 and 12 which has a very wide central reserve.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what studies were undertaken before his Department selected a three-lane carriageway on the M25, and how many motorways in England are four lane;

(2) if he is satisfied that a three-lane carriageway is adequate for all sections of the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Comprehensive studies to predict traffic flows were carried out in the design stages of the M25. The choice of carriageway width was based on these predictions. The M25 is generally dual three-lane, but dual four-lanes have been provided between junctions 13 (Staines interchange) and 15 (M4). The adjoining sections from junction 11 (Chertsey interchange) and to junction 16 (M40) have been built with dual three-lanes, but in a way which will facilitate the future provision of fourth lanes should that prove necessary.

There are six other sections of four-lane motorway in England, mostly short lengths between adjacent junctions.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the contractors and consultants who built the Wisley to Reigate section of the M25;

(2) what was the original date for the completion of the Wisley to Reigate section of the M25 as notified to his Department by the contractors and consultants.

Mrs. Chalker: The M25 between Wisley and Reigate was constructed under the following main contracts:—

Section of M25	*Contractor*	*Original Contract Completion Date*	*Revised Contract Completion Date*
A3 to Chatley Heath	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	30 August 1983	26 June 1984
Chatley Heath to Leatherhead	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.	5 November 1984	9 September 1985
Leatherhead interchange	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	15 April 1985	—
Leatherhead to Reigate	Birse Farr (formerly—Bovis/Birse) Joint Venture	23 December 1984	9 September 1985

All the contracts were supervised by W. S. Atkins & Partners, Consulting Engineers.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the precise nature of the problem which delayed the opening of the Wisely to Reigate section of the M25; and what is his Department's proposal for overcoming future maintenance problems on this section.

Mrs. Chalker: On the advice of Surrey county council it was decided that all the sections of the M25 between Wisley and Reigate should be opened at the same time. It was not possible to open the last section between Leatherhead and Reigate on the contract completion date of 9 September 1985 because of the need to repair joints formed in the concrete slabs and hairline cracks appearing in the slabs. Some repairs remain to be completed in the normal maintenance period of 12 months following

completion. These repairs, together with any other maintenance needed, will be so arranged as to minimise delays to traffic.

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made on traffic volume between Reigate and the Heathrow exit on the M25; and if he will publish those studies.

Mrs. Chalker: The latest estimated forecasts of traffic flows on the Reigate to Heathrow sections per 16-hour day in 1987, the expected first full year of operation of the complete M25, are in the following ranges:

Section of M25		
From	*To*	*Vehicles per day (000s)*
A217	A243	44 to 53
A243	A3	50 to 58
A3	A320	61 to 80
A320	M3	72 to 85
M3	A30	67 to 80
A30	Airport spur	78 to 85
Airport spur	M4	78 to 85

Motorways (Coaches)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made of the consequences of confining coaches to the centre and inner lanes of motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: As coaches are not confined to the centre and inside lanes of motorways, specific studies cannot be made. I have already announced that I am looking very carefully at every aspect of the speed and safety of coaches on motorways, including lane usage.

Motorways (Surfacing)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department gives to contractors over the choice of tarmac or concrete for motorway surfacing.

Mrs. Chalker: Unless there are engineering reasons to the contrary, contractors are provided with designs for concrete and bituminous pavement construction, and invited to tender prices for both. The designs are in accordance with the Department's standards, and materials and construction must be in accordance with the Department's specification. Those criteria ensure that either form of construction would normally be equally acceptable. The contract is then awarded on the basis of the lowest tender, which ensures that the most economical form of construction is adopted, and therefore ultimately determines the type of material that is used.

Air India Boeing 747 (Crash)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had consultations with the aviation authorities of Canada, Ireland and India regarding the cause of the loss of the Air India Boeing 747 off the coast of Ireland in June 1985; what advice on the matter he has received from the Civil Aviation Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The responsibility for the accident investigation into the loss of the Air India Boeing 747 lies with the Indian Government, with assistance from the state of manufacture.

I have had no consultations with the aviation authorities of India, Canada and Ireland regarding the cause of this tragic accident, but the Civil Aviation Authority, which is solely responsible for United Kingdom aviation safety regulation, is keeping in touch with all the relevant authorities pending the outcome of the accident investigation.

My accident investigation branch is also keeping in close touch with all the authorities concerned and is providing assistance to the Indian authorities when requested.

Second-hand Tyres

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further measures he intends to take concerning the dangers of second-hand tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Existing regulations prohibit the use and sale of sub-standard tyres, whether new or second-hand. I have recently advised motorists to check the condition and the markings on second-hand tyres before purchase.

Tachographs

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he is satisfied with the operation of the regulations regarding the construction of tachographs on coaches, and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation requiring tachographs on coaches to be crash-proof and fireproof, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Tachographs and recording charts must comply with the requirements of EEC regulation 1463/70. I am satisfied that this provides for appropriate standards of construction including some protection against fire and accidental damage. It is extremely rare for a tachograph chart to be destroyed in a crash or by fire. I do not believe more onerous requirements would be justified at present.

Light Dues

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the final report on the study of light dues.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a large number of most helpful comments from individuals and from representative bodies. I am most grateful to all concerned for the thought and attention that they have given to the proposals. I am considering the issues carefully and will make a further statement in due course.

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate, in terms of amount per vessel per year, of the cost of collecting a levy in respect of light dues from yachts under 20 tonnes.

Mr. Ridley: I have not yet reached any conclusion on the desirability of levying light dues on yachts that are at present exempt, nor made any estimate of the costs of levying such a charge.

Batheaston Bypass

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for a further round of public consultation to include the Beckford Spur, in addition to his Department's published details of alternative routes for the Batheaston bypass (A4) and the A36 at Bathampton and A46 at Swainswick; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: An unusually long period was allowed for public consultation about this scheme, and I now intend to proceed to a decision on a preferred route.

The so-called Beckford spur has no role to play in the national trunk road network, but should Avon county council wish to consult the public on it as a local distributor road, it is of course open to it to do so.

Nuclear Waste (Transport)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research has been undertaken involving the carriage of Magnox spent fuel by advanced gas-cooled reactor flasks with regard to crash tests and International Atomic Energy Agency drop tests;

(2) when the safety of transport of irradiated Magnox fuel by MK2a and MK2b flasks was last reviewed, and what conclusions were reached;

(3) on what grounds the use of MK2c flasks in the transport of irradiated fuels has been authorised as replacements for MK2a and MK2b flasks.

Mr. David Mitchell: We are satisfied, from tests carried out under the requirements of IAEA regulations, that those AGR flasks which are in some cases used to transport Magnox fuel can do so safely.

The MK2a Magnox fuel flask is no longer in service. Details of its withdrawal were given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in a written answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) (8 November 1983, c. *105*). The safety of MK2b and MK2c flasks was last reviewed in 1984 and their continued use was authorised by the Department.

The testing and assessment methods for all such flasks which are used by the CEGB meet the internationally agreed IAEA requirements. Their effectiveness was demonstrated by a 4-year programme of research, culminating in the train crash arranged in July 1984 in conjunction with British Rail.

Boeing 737 (Crash)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority concerning the crash of the Boeing 737 at Manchester airport in August, with particular reference to the problem of cracks in the engine burner cans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Civil Aviation Authority is solely responsible for United Kingdom aviation safety requirements and regulations. I understand that as a result of evidence arising from the accident investigation the CAA has required the burner cans on JT8D engines which have completed specified numbers of flights or flight hours to be inspected for unacceptable cracking.

International Driving Permits

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans any changes in the arrangements for issuing international driving permits to motorists travelling abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: International driving permits have for many years been issued on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club and the Royal Scottish Automobile Club. It is a task they perform responsibly and well. But I do not think the right to issue these permits should be restricted to these associations if other motoring organisations can show themselves to be suitably qualified. I have therefore decided, following examination of its proposed scheme, that the Secretary of State should delegate authority to the National Breakdown Recovery Club to issue international driving permits as from 1 January, 1986.

Cabotage

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in his talks with the West German Government seeking the extension of the rights of cabotage in West German waters to British-registered ships.

Mr. Ridley: I am pleased to announce that we have now reached a satisfactory agreement with the Federal Republic. This will have the effect of ensuring that British operators offering a competitive service will have no bureaucratic difficulties in participating in German cabotage trades. We shall be seeking similar arrangements with other EC member states which at present exclude our vessels from such trades, while continuing to press for the early adoption of the Commission's proposal for abolition of cabotage restrictions among member states.

Oxford Circus (Fire)

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer, given on 13 June, *Official Report*, column *539*, when London Regional Transport will publish a statement on the circumstances of the fire at Oxford Circus, and on the action being taken to prevent a recurrence.

Mr. David Mitchell: LRT will be publishing its statement today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

Domestic Air Routes (Competition)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the conditions prevailing on domestic air routes are such as to make competition possible with those airlines currently serving them and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to the reply*, 28 October 1985]: Before licensing a competing domestic service the Civil Aviation Authority, in accordance with its statutory duties, must consider a number of factors including whether a route can support competing services and the effect on an incumbent operator of licensing a competitor. There are no other constraints on route entry apart from statutory considerations such as these. Domestic fares in

particular are now effectively deregulated, although the authority retains powers to deal with anti-competitive behaviour on fares, as well as in other areas.

WALES

Higher Education (Teachers)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many teaching staff were employed in public sector higher education in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Figures on the number of teaching staff in public sector higher education are not available. however, the information on those employed in maintained higher and further education establishments in Wales is as follows:

Year (as at January)	*Teachers in maintained establishments of higher and further education**		
	Full-time	*Part-time (full-time equivalents)*	*Total full-time and full-time equivalents*
1979†	3,717	—	—
1980	3,822	578	4,400
1981	3,783	536	4,319
1982	3,834	571	4,405
1983	4,104	518	4,622
1984	4,158	604	4,762
1985	4,082	565	4,647

* Excluding adult education centres and youth clubs and centres.
† Figures on part-time numbers are not available.

Urban Development Grant

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total amount allocated in by his Department in urban development grant to each county council in Wales for the year 1984-85 and for each of the previous five years; and what are the estimated figures to be allocated to them in 1985-86 and 1986-87;

(2) what was the total amount allocated in by his Department in urban development grant for the year 1984-85 and for each of the previous five years, and what are the estimated figures to be allocated 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The urban development grant scheme was introduced in 1982 and the first approvals were announced in February 1983. Expenditure on approved projects may extend beyond the year of approval.

Total amounts approved for projects in Wales which have been completed or are in progress are, by year of approval:

1982-83 £ million	*1983-84 £ million*	*1984-85 £ million*	**1985-86 £ million*
3·552	2·23	10·62	2·016

* (to date)

The above figures include expenditure on approved projects submitted by four county councils, as follows:

County Council	*1982-83 £ million*	*1983-84 £ million*	*1984-85 £ million*	*1985-86 £ million*
South Glamorgan	0·385	0·045	8·5	0·093
Dyfed	—	0·016	—	—
Clwyd	0·338	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	0·025	—	—	—

Levels of urban development grant in 1986-87 will not be decided until the overall capital expenditure provision for Wales has been determined.

Community Council Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the mechanism within the Welsh grant-related expenditure formula whereby community councils' expenditure is taken into account.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Community councils' precepts form part of district councils' expenditure, which qualifies for rate support grant. Under the 1985-86 grant-related expenditure (GRE) formula, 50 per cent. of GRE which relates to community councils' precepts is distributed to district councils in proportion to their home population. The remaining 50 per cent. is distributed on the basis of enhanced population (as defined in note 5 to table 9.5 in Appendix 9 to the Welsh rate support grant report 1985-86) adjusted to take account of population density, population in accommodation lacking amenities and unemployment.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total public expenditure in Wales undertaken by community councils.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Approximately £6 million in 1985-86.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure in Wales during the last financial year by local authorities in Wales under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Figures for 1984-85 are still being collected. For 1983-84 the gross expenditure under section 137, by counties and districts in Wales, was £3·993 million; the net expenditure was £3·102 million. Expenditure under section 137 by community councils is not held centrally.

Health Authorities

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the amounts actually spent in each financial year from 1978-79 to 1984-85, at 1984-85 prices, by each individual Welsh health authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure incurred by Welsh Health Authorities at 1984-85 prices

£000's

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	Provisional for 1984-85
Clwyd	82,249	84,517	93,406	95,118	98,216	97,521	103,009
East Dyfed	70,902	72,241	76,532	78,058	66,747	69,236	72,008
Pembs					14,439	15,260	16,422
Gwent	105,187	106,842	112,920	115,972	120,655	122,350	125,091
Gwynedd	50,110	51,829	55,876	56,339	57,920	59,572	64,400
Mid Glam	123,316	124,885	132,959	134,006	138,514	141,370	146,780
Powys	24,391	25,200	26,698	27,200	28,518	29,046	29,846
South Glam	135,259	133,367	143,321	146,660	149,927	152,253	154,380
West Glam	83,585	84,911	90,930	93,301	96,035	96,884	101,224
WHTSO	24,325	22,056	28,898	29,462	34,583	36,215	25,766
Total	699,324	705,848	761,540	776,116	805,554	819,707	838,926

Notes: * Actual expenditure taken from the annual Accounts of health authorities has been adjusted to take account of general inflation as measured by the GDP market price deflator.

† Payments made centrally on behalf of health authorities for income tax, national insurance and superannuation have been included.

‡ Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county. From 1982-83 onwards the expenditure on the family practitioner services for the whole county is included in the East Dyfed health authority expenditure.

|| The expenditure on the family practitioner services included in the above figures is net of patient charges.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of people leaving youth training scheme courses in June in Wales are currently in full-time, permanent employment.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information for June leavers is not available. The most recent published results of a sample survey of people who left youth training schemes in Wales related to the period between July and September 1984. This gave a figure of 49 per cent. going into full-time employment.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales, of the 15 per cent. of youth training scheme leavers in Wales who receive Manpower Services Commission questionnaires regarding their employment status, what percentage reply.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The most recent 15 per cent. survey for which results are currently available for Wales is for young people who left youth training schemes between July and September 1984. This survey achieved a 67 per cent. response rate.

Dysentery

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people so far in the current year in Wales have notified that they have contracted dysentery; and what were the total notifications for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: For the numbers of notifications of dysentery in Wales in the years 1979 to 1984 I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 18 June 1985 at column *61* by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. Provisional notifications for the current year, up to the week ending 11 October, totalled 551.

Urban Programme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales by how much in real terms the urban programme has risen since 1979; and if he will break this figure down by each of the Welsh counties.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Using the GDP deflator as a measure of inflation, between 1979-80 and 1985-86 the urban programme (including urban development grant) has risen by £18·5 million in real terms. This figure is broken down as follows:

	£m
Clwyd	3·31
Dyfed	1·28
Gwent	1·70
Gwynedd	0·59
Mid Glamorgan	3·93
Powys	0·14
South Glamorgan	6·00
West Glamorgan	1·53

Cervical Cytology

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to give health authorities in Wales additional cash to enable them to put into effect the recommendations of the working party on cervical cytology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The cervical cytology screening service is managed on a district basis and its funding is the responsibility of the health authority concerned. Whilst it is not proposed to provide additional money for the service itself, the Welsh Office is funding the provision of computers for all the family practitioner committees and this will facilitate the administration of the scheme.

Mentally Handicapped People (West Glamorgan)

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much of the financial year 1984-85 had elapsed before he approved West Glamorgan's proposals for the development of services for mentally handicapped people in that year; why approval had not been given earlier; and what was the level of underspend for the council for that year on these plans;

(2) when approval for West Glamorgan plans for the development of services for mentally handicapped people was given in respect of the financial year 1985-86;

(3) if he will now take steps to place approval for West Glamorgan plans for the development of services for mentally handicapped people on a three-year rolling plan basis.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The West Glamorgan plan for the development of services over a 10-year period necessarily received detailed consideration by the Department and the all-Wales advisory panel and was the subject of consultation with the planning group before it could be approved on 7 June 1984. At that time a firm cash limit was announced for 1984-85 together with an advance indication of likely funding for 1985-86 and 1986-87. Due to a number of factors there was an underspend of £246,000 in 1984-85. A firm cash limit for 1985-86 was notified on 22 May 1985. Advance indication of the likely level of funding for the three year period starting 1987-88 will be given during 1986.

Health Services

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a statement of policies and priorities for health services in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have today published such a document. Copies have been placed in the Library and I have sent individual copies to all right hon. and hon. Members representing constituencies in Wales. I intend to publish a corporate plan for the NHS in Wales in a few months' time.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many hon. members have currently got a stop on one or more immigration cases;

(2) what proportion of stops is placed by hon. members on behalf of immigrants or relatives of immigrants resident in their own constituencies;

(3) how many immigration cases are currently subject to a stop;

(4) how many immigration cases have been placed on stop over the last 12 months;

(5) what is his policy with regard to placing a stop on an immigration case when *(a)* the approach is made by an hon. Member's secretary by telephone and *(b)* the approach is made by a lawyer stating that he has the agreement of an hon. Member.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1985 c. *209*]: The policy is to accept in good faith approaches by hon. Members, or their personal representatives, on the assumption that detailed representations about cases on which a stop has been placed will be submitted very quickly.

In the period from 1 January to 30 September this year hon. Members made representations in 4,146 cases handled by the immigration service compared with 3,532 in the whole of 1984. From 1 to 22 October an additional 764 representations have been received, bringing the total so far this year to 4,910. Currently representations are being considered in 3,325 passenger arrival cases. This substantial growth in case work is a cause for serious concern since the additional resources required to handle it are being drawn from the initial control at ports of entry and the longer this persists the more serious will become the impact on large numbers of other passengers. The more that representations are made, and the longer they take to deal with, the longer it is that persons refused entry are likely to stay in this country; and where it is not possible to serve removal directions within two months of the date of refusal the cost of removal may fall on public funds. Comprehensive information is not separately available of the number of hon. Members making representations nor on what proportion of stops is placed by hon. Members on behalf of passengers whose relatives or sponsors in this country are their constituents.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Bangladeshi nationals, applying for visits to the United Kingdom have been detained prior to a decision being made whether to admit or refuse, for July, August and September, broken down on a monthly basis, compared with the same period in 1984;

(2) how many Bangladeshis have genuinely absconded from temporary admission during the period July to September, compared with the same period in 1984;

(3) how many Bangladeshi visit refusals have resulted in representations from Members of Parliament for July, August and September, broken down on a monthly basis, compared with the same period in 1984;

(4) how many Bangladeshi nationals have been granted temporary admission for 10 days or more, on arrival, but on reporting back for their first interview have been refused and detained with no further temporary admission, in the months July to September, compared with same period in 1984;

(5) how many Bangladeshis have married while on temporary admission after claiming to be here for short visits during the period July to September 1985;

(6) how many Bangladeshi nationals were refused entry for visits at Heathrow in July, August and September, broken down on a monthly basis, compared with same period in 1984;

(7) how many Bengali interpreters were employed by the immigration service at Heathrow for the period July to October;

(8) what is his policy concerning detaining passengers awaiting decisions on applications for entry or results of representations by Members of Parliament in prison accommodation;

(9) If he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a large number of visitors were detained on the night of 4 October in the Queen's building, Heathrow, Harmondsworth detention centre and Ashford remand centre and in the case of at least one visitor from Bangladesh in a cell at the Northside police station.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1985, c. *208-9*]: Information about the number of citizens of Bangladesh recently refused leave to enter, including those who sought entry as visitors is available only from terminal 3 at Heathrow, as is the information requested about the number of representations from hon. Members, and that about absconders. The available information is as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Refusals of Entry		
July	22	129
August	28	237
September	22	318
TOTAL	72	684
Representations from Hon. Members		
July	7	57
August	4	122
September	5	181
TOTAL	16	360
Absconders who cannot be traced		
July - September	2	24

As far as detention is concerned, in the London airports area the immigration service detention centres at Harmondsworth, Queen's building and Gatwick are able to accommodate those passengers who are not considered appropriate to be granted temporary admission. Where this cannot be done passengers are detained in Ashford remand centre and, exceptionally, in other prison accommodation or in police cells. In recent weeks there has been a sharp rise in the arrival rate of nationals of Bangladesh who have been refused entry, a number of whom have not been considered appropriate to be granted temporary admission. On 4 October the number of people to be detained exceeded the available accommodation at the Harmonsworth, Queen's building and Gatwick detention centres. Those passengers for whom room could not be found in any of the three centres were detained in Ashford remand centre with the exception of one person who was detained at Uxbridge police station.

Three full-time and six hourly-paid Bengali interpreters were employed by the immigration service at Heathrow during the period July to October. The other information requested is either not available or not available in the form requested.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of arrivals in the United Kingdom from *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* India, *(c)* Pakistan and *(d)* Sri Lanka detained by the immigration authorities in each week during the past three months.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985, c. *270*]: The following figures, which are provisional, give the information available on the number of occasions on which passengers were taken by the immigration authorities to approved detention accommodation. They are based on returns from all ports of entry plus returns from the detention facilities at Harmondsworth and Heathrow Queen's building. Passengers who were taken to different buildings at different times may have been counted more than once. Some of those detained will subsequently have been granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom while consideration of their case is completed.

Nationality	*July*	*August*	*September*
Bangladesh	113	114	170
India	131	106	105
Pakistan	112	106	92
Sri Lanka	17	20	32

Heli-tele Surveillance Camera

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions over the past 12 months the Metropolitan police air support unit has used the heli-tele suveillance camera, what these occasions were, whether a film record was made during any of these surveillance operations and on what occasion the heli-tele was first used.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that over the past 12 months the heli-tele surveillance camera was used by his air support unit on about 30 occasions for the following purposes:

i. to assist security operations at such events as state visits, Trooping the Colour and the moving of high-risk prisoners from prison to court;

ii. to assist with traffic control at major sporting events such as the Cup Final;

iii. to assist with the command and control of police officers deployed at demonstrations and marches; and

iv. to assist in the preparation of training exercises.

Video recordings were made on a number of these occasions.

The commissioner assures me that on each occasion the use of heli-tele was fully within the guidelines for the use of equipment in police surveillance operations, a copy of which is in the Library.

Heli-tele was first used at the Notting Hill Gate carnival in 1977.

Baton Rounds

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in each London police district, what is the number of *(a)* baton rounds held in armouries, *(b)* weapons that discharge baton rounds and *(c)* officers trained in their use;

(2) which of the following departments of the Metropolitan police have stocks of plastic baton rounds, baton round launchers and officers trained in their use; and in each case what are the numbers involved: commissioner's office, A1 to A10, B1 to B14, C1 to C13, D1 to D15, area headquarters, training schools and holding centres.

Mr. Giles Shaw: For operational reasons it would not be sensible to disclose the quantity of baton round equipment held by the Metropolitan police, its location or the number of officers who have been trained in its use.

Metropolitan Police (Reorganisation)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responses have been received from the Greater London council, London boroughs and district councils and local authority associations concerning the

central structure of the reorganisation of the Metropolitan police; and how many responses were favourable and how many unfavourable.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The commissioner tells me that since he announced the broad outline of his proposals for reorganising the Metropolitan police in November 1984, he has received some 20 representations from borough and district councils, local authority associations and the Greater London Council. Among the points raised were the absence of external consultation before the announcement and the effect of the abolition of districts on community/police consultative arrangements. Assurances were also sought about the commissioner's intention to consult on the detail of the reorganisation.

As part of his commitment to consult widely on the implementation of the reorganisation, the commissioner earlier this year sought the views of all right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies wholly or partly within the Metropolitan police district, of borough and district councils and of community/police consultative groups on the proposed introduction of the eight new areas. He tells me that of the 63 per cent. who responded, 59 per cent. expressed agreement with the proposal; 7 per cent. agreed with reservations; 19 per cent. made no specific comment but expressed no objection; 6 per cent. either asked for further information or were unable to respond before consulting others; and 9 per cent. disagreed.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisations, companies, staff associations, and trades unions were consulted concerning reorganisation of the Metropolitan police prior to November 1984; what comments or reports were received; and which of them he has made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The commissioner informs me that he took advice from the following police forces and outside organisations:

Marks and Spencer
Shell International
Unilever
G.K.N.
MacDonalds
Corning Glass
British Leyland
McKinseys
Chloride
Ellerman Lines
I.C.L.
National Coal Board
I.C.I.
Prime Ministers Efficiency Unit
H.M. Treasury
H.M. Treasury (Staff Inspection and Evaluation Division)
Home Office (Scientific Research and Development Branch)
Home Office (Police Research Services Unit)
Ministry of Defence
Army (Northern Ireland and S.E. Command)
British Institute of Management
Institute of Management Services
Association of Teachers of Management
Oxford Regional Management Centre
South West Regional Management Centre
Anglian Regional Management Centre
Police Staff College
F.B.I. Academy, Quantico
Management Seminar, Boston, Massachusetts
Police Foundation
London Business School
University College London
Polytechnic of Central London
North East London Polytechnic

United Kingdom Police Forces
Avon and Somerset
Derbyshire
Devon and Cornwall
Hampshire
Humberside
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Northamptonshire
Nottinghamshire
Strathclyde
Sussex
West Midlands
West Yorkshire

Other Police Forces
Dallas
California Highway Patrol
Los Angeles
New York
San Diego
Sweden
Netherlands
Hong Kong

These organisations were approached during the research stage of the commissioner's review of the force organisation and management, and their advice was sought in a series of interviews with representatives who had particular expertise and experience in the management of large organisations. The commissioner informs me that no records were made of those interviews and no reports received.

The police staff associations and the civil staff trades unions were first informed of the reorganisation proposals in November 1984.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police authorities have sought 100 per cent. reimbursement from the Government of the cost of policing the miners' dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Ten.

Metropolitan Police (Anti-Terrorist Squad)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Metropolitan police anti-terrorist squad has been involved in the investigation of recent racial attacks in the London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, it has not been involved.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the role of the Metropolitan police anti-terrorist squad.

Mr. Giles Shaw: To investigate bombing attacks and terrorist attacks in the Metropolitan police district including politically motivated murder, attempted murder or kidnapping.

Children (Alcohol Consumption)

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct a review of the licensing laws in so far as they permit children over five years old to consume alcohol on licensed premises other than in the bar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to review the licensing law as it relates to the consumption of alcohol by young people on licensed premises.

Molesworth USAF Base (Incident)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cambridgeshire police as to the reasons why the police took photographs of visitors to the peace camp at Molesworth USAF base on 13 September and as to where those photographs are now held.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Cambridgeshire informs me that, so far as he is aware no such photographs were taken. He will however make further inquiries if additional details are provided.

Prisoners (Accommodation)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were *(a)* two to a cell and *(b)* three to a cell on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor: Information on cell sharing is collected once a month. Figures for October are being compiled. I shall write to the hon. Member when they are available.

RAF Lindholme

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total cost of purchasing Lindholme Royal Air Force station and of converting it for use as a prison.

Mr. Mellor: The cost of the site was £3·6 million. We are undertaking building work totalling approximately £9 million to provide accommodation for 750 prisoners.

Mr. Godfrey Pritchard

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will conclude his consideration of the representations regarding the conviction of Mr. Godfrey Pritchard.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to do so shortly.

Courthouses, The Wirral (Access)

Mr. Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether disabled justices, defendants and the public have access to the courthouses in the Wirral.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Neither of the two magistrates' courthouses in the Wirral is modern, but we understand that access to courtrooms on the first floor is provided for wheelchair users at Birkenhead. I understand that the court in Wallasey is not so convenient, but that arrangements could be made for a disabled defendant to appear at a court on the ground floor.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the hon. Member for Birkenhead has not yet received a reply to his letter to the clerk of Wirral justices of 13 March about access by disabled people to the courthouse in the Wirral, nor to his reminder of 11 July.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We understand that a reply has now been sent to the hon. Member's letter.

Riots

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the amount of compensation paid by central and local government for damage caused by each riot since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 responsibility for paying compensation rests with the compensation authority for the police area. No central record is kept of payments made. After the disturbances in 1981, a special scheme was instituted whereby in certain circumstances the Home Office met 60 per cent. of certain expenditure arising from the disturbances, including compensation payments. Four compensation authorities qualified for that scheme and to date the following sums have been paid to each by the Home Office in respect of compensation payments:

Compensation Authority	*£m*
Greater Manchester county council	0·29
Merseyside county council	3·40
West Yorkshire county council	0·99
Receiver for the Metropolitan police district	2·15

Drugs Offences

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cheshire as to the number of people *(a)* within the area covered by the Cheshire constabulary and *(b)* within the area covered by the Macclesfield division of the Cheshire constabulary who have been charged with (i) possession of and (ii) supplying *(a)* amphetamines, *(b)* heroin and *(c)* cocaine in each of the last three years; and if he will publish the information in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Mellor: The information available for the Cheshire police force area is given in the following table. Police forces are not required to provide centrally any information for individual divisions or stations within their areas.

Persons proceeded against in the Cheshire police force area for certain offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Type of drug	*Type of offence**	*Number of persons*		
		1982	*1983*	*1984*
Heroin	Unlawful possession	3	9	55
	Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	—	2	4
	Unlawful supply	—	—	18
Cocaine	Unlawful possession	4	—	6
	Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	1	—	1
	Unlawful supply	—	—	—

Type of drug	Type of offence*	Number of persons 1982	1983	1984
Amphetamines	Unlawful possession	12	18	19
	Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	2	4	6
	Unlawful supply	3	2	3

*As the same person may be proceeded against for more than one offence or for more than one type of drug, the rows cannot be added together to produce totals.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department of those persons in Wales convicted of *(a)* all drugs related offences and *(b)* offences related to the use of heroin or its derivatives, how many were unemployed for each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *44*]: The information available, from returns made mainly by the police, is given in the following table; corresponding figures for 1985 will not be available until the summer of next year.

Persons found guilty of offences under drugs legislation or other offences involving controlled drugs

Wales, 1980-84 *Number of persons*

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
All offences					
Total number of persons	800	771	1,000	1,110	1,297
Number recorded as unemployed	342	417	598	760	856
Offences involving heroin					
Total number of persons	11	12	15	25	54
Number recorded as unemployed	8	7	11	20	47

Leicester (Police Costs)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Leicestershire as to the additional costs of policing the city of Leicester during the nights of 9 and 10 October, and if he will make a statement on the disturbances which took place in Leicester on those dates.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number of prisoners on remand who have been waiting (i) more than six months, (ii) more than nine months and (iii) more than 12 months for their trial at the latest available date *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* at Cambridge Crown court, and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information for England and Wales is that given in the letter of 10 September 1985 to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), a copy of which is in the Library. Corresponding figures for Cambridge Crown court are not available centrally. The prosecution of Offences Act 1985 established a scheme for applying time limits in criminal proceedings. Field trials are about to begin in four areas to test the practical implications and effects before we apply statutory limits.

Cruelty to Animals (Circuses)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many circuses have been prosecuted over the last five years for cruelty to animals.

Mr. Mellor: The information, which may be incomplete, on proceedings for all offences of cruelty to animals is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 1" (Table S.1.1(A) of the 1984 issue under offence classification 108). The information collected centrally does not identify prosecutions against circuses. However, within the published totals, only one or two prosecutions a year were for cruelty to performing animals.

Farriers (Registration)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the operation of the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no reason to be dissatisfied with the general working of the Act. Its day-to-day administration is the responsibility of the Farriers Registration Council, which will no doubt be in a position to answer any specific questions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Laboratory, Lasswade

Mr. Steel asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the budget for the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade in the last financial year; and what proportion of that budget represented expenditure on research and development.

Mr. Jopling: The recorded expenditure for the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade in the last financial year was £1,425,000 of which £193,000 represented expenditure on research and development projects as such.

Mr. Steel asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the proposed closure of the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade and the financial savings expected to arise from closure.

Dame Judith Hart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the proposed closure of the central veterinary laboratory at Lasswade.

Mr. Jopling: Research and development spending by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service will be reduced by some £4 million in 1986-87. This is in line with earlier decisions to reduce Government expenditure on agricultural research and development.

This will be achieved by rationalising the organisation of ADAS's R & D and concentrating work on fewer sites.

This approach is intended to maintain ADAS's capability to respond to advice on the longer term priorities for R & D which the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food is considering and to respond to the needs of industry as expressed through the financial contributions which the Government consider the industry should make towards the cost of R & D from which it benefits. This approach has been endorsed by the priorities board.

As part of these economies, the department of the central veterinary laboratory located at Lasswade will close from 1 April 1986. The arrangements for maintaining the essential services needed in the areas concerned will be announced later. Until these announcements have been made it will not be possible to provide figures on the overall financial savings resulting from closure, nor will it be possible to assess the number of redundancies likely to be needed.

Bread Manufacture

Mr. Normanton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the Government regulations applicable to the manufacture of bread.

Mr. Jopling: The main regulations which apply to the manufacture of bread are, as follows:

(a) the Bread and Flour Regulations 1963, as amended, to be replaced entirely on 1 July 1986 by the Bread and Flour Regulations 1984 covering England and Wales. Similar regulations exists in Scotland and Northern Ireland;

(b) the Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Bread) Order 1977, the Weights and Measures (packaged goods) Regulations 1979, as amended and the Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Miscellaneous Foods) Order 1984 covering Great Britain. Similar legislation exists in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the manufacture of bread in the United Kingdom is subject to regulations which apply to foodstuffs in general, covering, for example, health and hygiene, labelling, contaminants and units of measurement.

Strawberry Pulp

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the level of imports of strawberry pulp and the level of domestic production; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: We have received representations on behalf of strawberry growers about the impact on profitability of imports of strawberry pulp. We have no powers to act unilaterally on this. As a result of the pressure we have exerted, the European Commission has reached agreement with the Polish and Yugoslavian authorities on measures to safeguard the interests of strawberry and other soft fruit growers in the Community. My noble Friend the Minister of State is in touch with the farmers unions and will review developments with them next month.

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available to his Department in respect of the number of domestic producers of strawberry pulp and the number of domestic users of strawberry pulp in each of the last five years *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in the East Anglian region.

Mrs. Fenner: No information is available on the number of domestic producers or users of strawberry pulp. It is understood that 17 per cent. of the strawberry area in England and Wales was for processing in 1984 and that over 90 per cent. of this was in the eastern region.

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report* such information as he has as to the average price per tonne of *(a)* domestic strawberry pulp and *(b)* imported strawberry pulp from each source country in each of the last five years, and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: No information is available on average prices per tonne of domestic strawberry pulp. The information on imports is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of strawberry pulp. Average unit value (£/tonne cif)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Netherland	425	299	378	441	411
FRG			478	554	503
Irish Republic	336	286	421	484	428
France		490			
Italy		340			
Greece					1,094
Poland	119	280	339	430	303
Israel					549

Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the strawberry acreage in England and Wales and *(b)* the tonnage of strawberry pulp imported, in total and from each source country, in each of the last five years; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The information is as follows:

(a) Strawberry acreage. England and Wales 1980 to 1984

1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
17,013	16,103	15,856	15,500	14,806

(b) United Kingdom imports of strawberry pulp 1980 to 1984 (tonnes)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Netherlands	651	752	1,797	2,470	2,219
Federal Republic of Germany	—	—	18	33	41
Irish Republic	1,609	1,433	1,088	1,107	1,206
France	—	18	—	—	—
Italy	—	13	—	—	—
Greece	—	—	—	—	1
Poland	7	843	1,982	1,416	1,090
Israel	—	—	—	—	2
TOTAL	2,267	3,059	4,885	5,026	4,559

Source:
(a) MAFF June agricultural and horticultural census.
(b) United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Beef

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tons of beef were covered by the recent decision of the management committee in Brussels to offer beef for sale at 18p per pound; and what information he has as regards the amount sent to individual nations under this arrangement.

Mr. Jopling: I think my hon. Friend has in mind European Commission Regulation 2670/8 of 23

September. This made certain intervention beef available to exporters at an average price of 1,540 ecu per tonne (about 43p per lb). It is understood that the Commission believes that contracts to purchase some 175,000 tonnes are likely under this regulation, and that the most likely destination for the meat is the Soviet Union. If this were the case, export restitutions worth an average 995 ecu per tonne (about 28p per lb) would be payable.

The Government continue to press for suitable action to be taken under the common agricultural policy to curb surplus production, and meanwhile to argue that surplus stocks should be disposed of as economically as possible. We also press for intervention beef to be made available for use within the Community as appropriate and on 24 September the Commission made a regulation which releases certain beef to EC processors at special prices.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest information he has on the size of intervention stocks in public and private storage in the European Economic Community for the various commodities covered by intervention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 14 January 1985 at column 30. The note referred to in that reply was last updated on 25 October.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General regarding the operation of the common agricultural policy in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The report to the Committee of Public Accounts by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the achievements and costs of the common agricultural policy in the United Kingdom recognises the efforts we have made to contain the budgetary cost of the CAP by pressing for price reductions. Although it is critical of some aspects of the current operation of the CAP, it is broadly in line with the Government's own views on how this could best be improved, particularly with regard to the need for a more market-orientated price policy. The Government will continue to press this approach in discussions in the Community on future arrangements for the CAP.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hayward asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he plans any changes in cash limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. The cash limit for class III vote 4 (other agricultural and food services and support for the fishing industry) is being reduced by £343,000 from £145,676,000 to £145,333,000. The change is made up as follows:

a decrease of £903,000 because the increased cash limit provision arising from the carry forward of capital expenditure under the end year flexibility scheme announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 18 July 1985 is no longer required.

an increase on this cash limit of £560,000 subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate to provide for additional expenditure on payments to producers in England discontinuingmilk production. The increase will be offset by savings on such payments in Wales and there will therefore be no net addition to the planning total of public expenditure. The cash limit on class XVI vote 5 (agricultural services, support for the fishing industry, regional and industrial development, Wales) is being reduced by £560,000 from £47,170,000 to £46,610,000.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

2. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over 12 months; and what this is as a percentage of those registered unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 July, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,327,000, 41 per cent. of the total. The corresponding number of unemployed registrants in April 1979 was 367,000.

4. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the present number of people who are unemployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 12 September 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,346,200.

10. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Paymaster General what, at the latest convenient date, were the numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in Erdington and Birmingham out of work for more than 12 months; and how this compares with the position a year ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 July 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of male claimants in the Birmingham, Erdington constituency who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 3,463. The number of female claimants was 951. The corresponding figures for 12 July 1984 are 3,443 male and 932 female claimants.

For the Birmingham travel to work area, on 11 July 1985 the number of male claimants who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 45,947. The number of female claimants was 13,011. The corresponding figures for 12 July 1984 are 46,591 male and 12,554 female claimants.

16. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the work force was unemployed in May 1979; and what is the proportion unemployed at the present time.

Mr. David Trippier: On 12 September 1985 the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom was 13·8 per cent., and the corresponding estimate for May 1979 was 4·9 per cent.

17. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

20. **Mr. Adley** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest level of employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In June, after nine successive quarterly increases, the employed labour force in the United Kingdom had risen to 24,245,000. On 12 September, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,346,000.

18. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Paymaster General what are the current numbers unemployed; and what this is as a proportion of the work force.

Mr. David Trippier: On 12 September 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,346,200 which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 13·8 per cent.

21. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed in the Rotherham metropolitan borough; how many of these have been unemployed for over one year; and how many are under 20 years of age.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 July, the latest date for which analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, the number of claimants unemployed in the Rotherham metropolitan borough was 18,235 of which 8,387 have been unemployed for over 12 months. There were 3,610 claimants under 20 years of age, and of those 650 have been unemployed for over 12 months.

24. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his practice to give as much publicity to the numbers of people who found work, and the number of jobs advertised and available through local jobcentres as he does the number of people who have become unemployed in each monthly statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The press notice giving each month's unemployment figures already includes the latest figures on vacancies at jobcentres, as well as information on the number of people becoming and ceasing to be unemployed. As from 31 October, the monthly press notice will also show job placings made by jobcentres.

26. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 September 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,346,000.

27. **Mr. David Young** asked the Paymaster General what are the most recent figures for the total number of job vacancies at career offices in Great Britain; and how many people are registered unemployed for each vacancy.

31. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General what are the most recent figures for the total number of vacancies at career offices in Great Britain; and how many people are registered unemployed for each vacancy.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 6 September 1985, there were 13,522 unfilled vacancies at careers offices in Great Britain. Valid ratios of vacancies to unemployed cannot be calculated because many vacancies for which young people are eligible are not notified to careers offices. For example, many young people find employment through jobcentres.

29. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Paymaster General what is the level of unemployment at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 September 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,346,198.

30. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of those who left school in the current year is estimated to be in full time employment other than is provided by the youth training scheme and other special measures; and what was the comparable figures in October 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information of the type requested is being obtained in the special studies referred to in the reply to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 18 February at columns 347-8. First results for young people who reached minimum school-leaving age during the 1983-84 academic year are expected to become available around the end of this year, while results covering the equivalent 1984-85 group (in England and Wales) will follow a year later.

32. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over one year, two years, and three years, respectively; and what plans the Government have for retraining or re-employing those who do not find places on the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 July 1985, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over one year was 1,326,884. Of these, 799,379 had been unemployed for over two years and 506,807 for over three years.

Our White Paper, "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation" (Cmnd. 9474) describes the current range of employment and training measures and explains our strategy to achieve sustained economic growth. It is only through such growth that more permanent jobs for all unemployed people will be created.

36. **Mr. Madden** asked the Paymaster General how many young people are currently unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton) earlier today.

40. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest total number of unemployed in the West Midlands; and how this commpares with 12 months ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 September 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the west midlands was 360,799. The corresponding figure for September 1984 was 360,411.

44. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of unemployed persons in the United Kingdom compared with May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 September 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, was 3,180,000. The corresponding figure for May 1979 was 1,184,100.

46. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently in work in the United Kingdom: and what were the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), earlier today.

47. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest number of people unemployed; and how many of them are aged 50 to 60 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,235,036, of whom 495,827 were aged at least 50 but under 60 years.

60. **Mr. Janner** asked the Paymaster General how many people he estimates have been unemployed for over 12 months in the Leicester travel-to-work area.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of people claiming benefit for over 12 months in the Leicester travel-to-work area was 11,338.

Mrs. Currie asked the Paymaster General if he will show, for the travel-to-work areas covered by the Derbyshire, South constituency, the numbers leaving the unemployment register as a result of *(a)* age and *(b)* obtaining employment, for the last three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the reasons why unemployed persons cease to be unemployed claimants is not available.

Mrs. Currie asked the Paymaster General if he will show, for the travel-to-work areas covered by the Derbyshire, South constituency, the numbers of vacancies notified to jobcentres for the last three years, and the number of such vacancies currently unfilled.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table relates to the jobcentres of Derby and Swadlincote which cover areas closely corresponding to the parliamentary constituency of south Derbyshire. Figures are not available for travel-to-work areas since they do not correspond to jobcentre area boundaries.

	Weeks in period	*Derby jobcentre*	*Swadlincote jobcentre*
Vacancies Notified			
8 March 1982 to 4 March 1983	52	8,183	498
7 March 1983 to 2 March 1984	52	8,687	530
5 March 1984 to 8 March 1985	53	11,650	677
1 April 1985 to 6 September 1985	22	5,649	322
Unfilled vacancies on 6 September 1985		635	36

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Paymaster General if he will give a breakdown of the 600,000 new jobs created since June 1983, showing how many such jobs were part-time work for women, how many were second jobs, and how many were self-employed jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: The net increase of 654,000 in the employed labour force in Great Britain between June 1983 and June 1985 (the latest date for which comprehensive figures are available) included net increases of 380,000 part-time female employees in employment and 399,000 self-employed people.

The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified, but estimates from the labour force surveys suggest an increase of 60,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984 (the latest date for which estimates are available) in the number of people with a second job as an employee.

The employment estimates do not include second jobs when they are held as self-employed.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in employment in Derbyshire and Amber Valley since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information is for the period from June 1978 to September 1981 when censuses of employment were taken and is as follows:

Employees in Employment

Thousands

	June 1978	*September 1981*	*Net change 1978 to 1981*
Derbyshire	357·3	338·9	18·4
Amber Valley	40·2	40·0	0·2

Censuses have been taken triennially since 1978. Results of the September 1984 census of employment are expected to become available during the first quarter of 1986.

Earnings

15. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Paymaster General how many workers in full-time employment earn less than £100 per week.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In April 1985 approximately 2½ million full-time adult employees working a full week had gross weekly earnings of less than £100.

Voluntary Project Programme

19. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Paymaster General what was the expenditure in 1984-85 on the voluntary project programme; and what is the estimated expenditure in the current year.

Mr. Alan Clark: Expenditure on the voluntary projects programme in 1984-85 was £9·3 million. It is estimated that total expenditure in the programme in 1985-86 will be £12 million.

Trade Unions (Political Funds)

22. **Mr. Freud** asked the Paymaster General what monitoring he undertakes of trade union political fund ballots.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We keep a regular watch on publicly available reports about these ballots and take careful note of any representations made to us.

25. **Mr. Beith** asked the Paymaster General how many ballots relating to trade union political funds under the terms of the Trade Union Act 1984 have taken place.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) earlier today.

Young Worker Scheme

23. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been employed under the young worker scheme since its inception.

Mr. Alan Clark: Applications have been approved for 403,227 young people employed under the young workers scheme since it began on 4 January, 1982.

Youth Training Scheme

28. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the implementation of the two year youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 28 October.

33. **Mr. Stott** asked the Paymaster General whether there has been any improvement in the employment prospects of young people leaving the youth training scheme since the survey results announced in July.

51. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Paymaster General whether there has been any improvement in the employment prospects of young people leaving the youth training scheme since the survey results announced in July.

Mr. Trippier: The results of the survey of leavers from the youth training scheme placed in the Library in July showed that 49 per cent. of trainees who left the scheme in October 1984, and 51 per cent. of those who left in November 1984, were in work some three months later. The latest results, for those who left in April and May 1985, show that 62 per cent. were in employment.

34. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the proportion of youth training scheme leavers finding employment.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of young people leaving the youth training scheme. This survey provides accurate information about the proportion of leavers finding employment. The latest survey results, covering young people who left the scheme during April and May 1985, show 62 per cent. in work. These results have been placed in the Library.

59. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Paymaster General what share of the cost of the two-year youth training scheme will be met by employers.

Mr. Trippier: As programmes under the two-year scheme will involve differing costs and attract varying levels of Government funding, the proportion of the cost which is contributed by employers or other training providers will also vary.

Vredling Directive (Worker Information and Consultation)

35. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Paymaster General what recent discussion he has held with his European Economic Community counterparts concerning the Vredling directive on worker information and consultation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As no further discussions have been held on the proposal, I have nothing to add to my previous reply to the hon. Member on 17 July at column *170*.

Tourist Industry

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of *(a)* employees in employment and *(b)* self-employed persons is directly and indirectly engaged in the tourist industry; and what has been the trend in the last five years.

Mr. David Trippier: Tourism is one of many activities which provide a stimulus to employment in a range of service industries such as hotels, catering, retailing, recreation, arts, leisure, and so on. It is therefore not possible to identify employment supported by tourism from regularly produced estimates of employment for these industries. An estimate derived from information on tourism expenditure by foreign visitors and Britons suggests that out of 23 million in employment in Great Britain in 1983 about 1 million were supported directly or indirectly by tourist spending.

The following table presents the latest estimates of employees employed in those industries which are considered to be most clearly related to tourism: these include employees who are not engaged in tourism, and exclude employees in other industries who are supporting tourism, but less directly.

Employees in employment in selected industries

Great Britain

June 1985 *Industry (SIC 1980)*	*Percentage of all employees*
Restaurants, snack bars, cafes and other eating places (AH 6611 & AH 6612)	0·9
Public houses and bars (AH 6620)	1·2
Night clubs and licensed clubs (AH 6630)	0·7
Hotel trade (AH 6650)	1·3
Other tourist or short-stay accommodation (AH 6670)	0·3
Libraries, museums, art galleries etc. (AH 9770)	0·3
Sport and other recreational services (AH 9791)	1·3

Source: Employment Gazette

The proportion working in these industries has risen from a total of 5·3 per cent. of all employees in 1980 to 6 per cent. in 1985: this trend follows from an increase of around 65,000 employees in tourism related industries and an overall decline in other industries.

Estimates of self employment are not regularly available in detail of these industries. The available figures are as follows:

Self employment in selected industries

Great Britain

June 1981 *Industry (SIC 1980)*	*Percentage of all Self-employed*
Restaurants, snack bars, cafes and other eating places (AH 6611 & AH 6612)	2·3
Public houses and bars (AH 6620)	2·4
Night clubs and licensed clubs (AH 6630)	0·1
Hotel trade (AH 6650)	1·5
Other tourist or short-stay accommodation (AH 6670)	0·2
Libraries, museums, art galleries etc. (AH 9770)	—
Sport and other recreational services (AH 9791)	0·8

Source: Census of Population 1981.

Wages Councils

38. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Paymaster General how many young people are employed in industries covered by wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is estimated that 500,000 young people aged under 21 years work in jobs covered by wages councils.

39. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Paymaster General what research he has conducted into the likely employment effects of abolishing wages council protection for employees reaching the age of 21 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's intention is to exclude those aged under 21 years from wages council regulation. There is a body of evidence which indicates that, if the pay of young people relative to that of adults declines, their employment opportunities will increase. Some of this increase will be at the expense of older people.

41. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Paymaster General how many women are employed in industries covered by wages councils.

50. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Paymaster General how many women are employed in industries covered by wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: About 2·2 million.

42. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Paymaster General which organisations representing workers in wages council industries supported the Government's decision on the reform of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since the announcement of the Government's decision to reform wages councils one representation has been received from an organisation representing workers in a wages council industry. This did not support the decision.

Wage Agreements

43. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received advocating legislation to make wage agreements legally binding; and what response he has made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. Employers and trade unions are free to enter into legaly enforceable agreements if they wish.

Training and Skill Shortages

45. **Mr. Pike** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received about training and skill shortages in British industry.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. and noble Friend and I have received a small number of letters related primarily to skill shortages. We know that there is some concern about shortages in particular areas, and the subject continues to be kept under close review. The Manpower Services Commission compiles regular reports on shortages and takes these into account when formulating its local and national programmes.

Wages

48. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Paymaster General by what percentage young peoples' wages, for boys and girls, have fallen relative to adult wages since May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The average earnings of boys relative to men fell by 10 per cent., and those of girls relative to women fell by 11 per cent., between April 1979 and April 1985.

Northern Region

49. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have been created in the northern region since March 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

Between March 1983 and June 1985 the civilian employed labour force in the Northern region is estimated to have decreased by 12,000.

Job Creation

52. **Mr. Gordon Brown** asked the Paymaster General how many additional jobs have been created from 1983 to the present day; and what proportion of these are second jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

Between June 1983 and June 1985 (the latest date for which comprehensive quarterly figures are available) the Great Britain employed labour force increased by 654,000.

The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified but estimates from the labour force surveys suggest an increase of 60,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984 (the latest date for which estimates are available) in the number of people with a second job as an employee.

The employment estimates do not include second jobs when they are held as self employed.

56. **Mr. Chope** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the latest figure for the net increase in jobs since 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between June 1983 and June 1985 the Great Britain employed labour force increased by 654,000.

Young Persons (Training)

53. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Paymaster General what numbers of young people are presently completing training with an apprenticeship or recognised equivalent certificate; and what were the numbers in May 1979.

Mr. Trippier: The labour force survey shows the level of young people undertaking apprenticeship training as 356,000 in 1979 and 327,000 in 1984. The numbers entering traditional apprenticeships will become increasingly irrelevant as a measure of the real level of skills training being undertaken by industry because of both the reform of existing training arrangements and the substantial provision of initial skills training now taking place under the youth training scheme.

Government-sponsored Training

54. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General what numbers of people over the age of 25 years are receiving Government-sponsored training; and what proportion are finding employment on completion of a training course.

Mr. Trippier: In total we aim to help to train some 220,000 adults this year through the Manpower Services Commission's adult training programme. About half of these will be unemployed people. The main adult training schemes involving directly funded training for unemployed people had some 27,400 in training at the end of September 1985, the latest date for which figures are available. It is estimated that two-thirds of these were aged 25 years or over.

School Leavers

55. **Mr. Strang** asked the Paymaster General how many school leavers of all ages were unemployed or on youth training schemes at the latest available date, and what was the comparable figure five years ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 12 September 1985, the number of unemployed claimant school leavers of all ages in Great Britain was 419,448, of whom 152,603 were under the age of 18. The corresponding numbers of unemployed registrant school leavers in September 1980 were 277,070 and 196,327 respectively and are not directly comparable.

The estimated number of young people in Great Britain participating in the youth training scheme at the end of August 1985 was 291,007 while numbers participating in the youth opportunities programme at the end of August 1980 were 114,300. Within these totals, recent school leavers cannot be identified.

Job Vacancies

57. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Paymaster General whether he will list the travel-to-work areas where there are more jobs available than people seeking work.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is not available.

Industrial Tribunals

58. **Mr. Richard Holt** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to review the operation of industrial tribunals with particular regard to the formality of their proceedings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The operation of the industrial tribunals is kept under constant review. The Government will continue to look at ways in which industrial tribunal proceedings can be improved without interfering with their judicial independence. In that context I welcome statements made by the judicial authorities themselves discouraging legalism and the excessive quotation of guideline authority in industrial tribunal proceedings.

Manpower Services Commission

61. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Paymaster General what criteria are adopted by the Manpower Services Commission for the acceptance of projects offered by local industry; for what reasons an offer by Guinness Ltd. at Park Royal in Brent to take 50 trainees was rejected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and I shall place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Young Persons

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General what, for each region of Great Britain, are the estimates produced by the careers service for the Manpower Services Commission of the number and proportion of (1) 16-year-olds and (2) 17-year-olds who will *(a)* stay on in school or further education or *(b)* leave school and join the labour market, and, the number of those who will (i) get work, (ii) remain unemployed and (iii) enter the youth training schemes, for the last year available; and what were the figures for all categories for all years for which figures are available, assuming the youth opportunities programme precedes the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information for the youth training scheme is as follows. The figures represent the careers service's best estimates of the destinations of 16 and 17-year-olds who were eligible to leave school in the academic years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85. The figures for 31 December 1985 are projections made by the careers service in autumn 1984 and revised in January 1985. There are no equivalent figures for the youth opportunities programme.

Careers service estimates of the destinations of school leavers by 31 December following the end of the school year
16 year olds 1982-83

Region	*(a) Total (b+c)*	*(b) School FE*	*(c) Labour market (d+e)*	*(d) Employed outside YTS*	*(e) Unemployed/YTS*
Northern					
Numbers '000s	42	14	28	7	21
Per cent.		34	66	24	76
Yorks and Humber					
Numbers '000s	79	31	48	17	31
Per cent.		39	61	34	66
North West					
Numbers '000s	110	44	66	22	44
Per cent.		40	60	33	67
Midlands					
Numbers '000s	145	59	86	29	57
Per cent.		40	60	33	67
South West					
Numbers '000s	63	27	36	16	20
Per cent.		43	57	45	55
South East					
Numbers '000s	176	88	88	43	45
Per cent.		50	50	49	51

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
London					
Numbers '000s	89	45	44	21	23
Per cent.		51	49	48	52
Scotland*					
Numbers '000s	68	39	29	9	20
Per cent.		57	43	30	70
Wales					
Numbers '000s	43	20	23	7	16
Per cent.		47	53	29	71

* Scottish figures for 1982-83 are not comparable with figures for the later years because of a change in the basis of calculation.

Careers service estimates of the destinations of school leavers by 31 December following the end of the school year
16 year olds 1983-84

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Northern					
Numbers '000s	41	14	27	5	22
Per cent.		33	67	19	81
Yorks and Humber					
Numbers '000s	78	29	49	14	35
Per cent.		37	63	29	71
North West					
Numbers '000s	108	43	65	18	47
Per cent.		40	60	28	72
Midlands					
Numbers '000s	144	58	86	30	56
Per cent.		40	60	35	65
South West					
Numbers '000s	62	26	36	14	22
Per cent.		42	58	39	61
South East					
Numbers '000s	171	84	87	40	47
Per cent.		49	51	46	54
London					
Numbers '000s	85	43	42	20	22
Per cent.		51	49	48	52
Scotland*					
Numbers '000s	103	59	44	14	30
Per cent.		57	43	32	68
Wales					
Numbers '000s	43	20	23	5	18
Per cent.		47	53	22	78

* Scottish figures for 1982-83 are not comparable with figures for the later years because of a change in the basis of calculation.

Careers service estimates of the destinations of school leavers by 31 December following the end of the school year
16 year olds 1984-85

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Northern					
Numbers '000s	40	14	26	5	21
Per cent.		35	65	18	81
Yorks and Humber					
Numbers '000s	77	29	48	14	34
Per cent.		38	62	29	71
North West					
Numbers '000s	106	43	63	17	46
Per cent.		41	59	27	73
Midlands					
Numbers '000s	143	58	85	22	63
Per cent.		41	59	26	74
South West					
Numbers '000s	61	26	35	13	22
Per cent.		43	57	37	63
South East					

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Numbers '000s	169	84	85	36	49
Per cent.		50	50	42	58
London					
Numbers '000s	82	42	40	19	21
Per cent.		51	49	48	52
Scotland*					
Numbers '000s	98	55	43	14	29
Per cent.		56	44	33	67
Wales					
Numbers '000s	43	20	23	4	19
Per cent.		47	53	17	83

* Scottish figures for 1982-83 are not comparable with figures for the later years because of a change in the basis of calculation.

Careers service estimates of the destinations of school leavers by 31 December following the end of the school year
17 year olds 1982-83

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Northern					
Numbers '000s	10·6	7·9	2·7	0·8	1·9
Per cent.		74	26	31	69
Yorks and Humber					
Numbers '000s	22·1	15·3	6·8	3·7	3·0
Per cent.		69	31	55	45
North West					
Numbers '000s	28·5	21·7	6·8	2·6	4·2
Per cent.		76	24	38	62
Midlands					
Numbers '000s	36·3	27·4	8·9	4·0	4·9
Per cent.		76	24	45	55
South West					
Numbers '000s	17·0	12·5	4·6	2·7	1·9
Per cent.		73	17	59	41
South East					
Numbers '000s	62·0	44·0	17·8	10·2	7·6
Per cent.		71	29	57	43
London					
Numbers '000s	35·7	23·8	11·9	6·5	5·4
Per cent.		67	33	55	45
Scotland*					
Numbers '000s	49·1	28·3	20·9	7·9	13·0
Per cent.		58	42	38	62
Wales					
Numbers '000s	14·5	10·6	3·9	1·7	2·3
Per cent.		73	27	42	58

* Scottish figures for 1982-83 are not comparable with figures for the later years because of a change in the basis of calculation.

Careers service estimates of the destinations of school leavers by 31 December following the end of the school year
17 year olds 1983-84

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Northern					
Numbers '000s	9·8	7·5	2·3	0·7	1·6
Per cent.		77	23	30	70
Yorks and Humber					
Numbers '000s	21·0	14·4	6·6	3·1	3·5
Per cent.		69	31	47	53
North West					
Numbers '000s	24·0	17·6	6·4	3·0	3·4
Per cent.		73	27	47	53
Midlands					
Numbers '000s	32·1	23·5	8·6	3·7	4·9
Per cent.		73	27	43	57
South West					
Numbers '000s	16·3	11·9	4·4	2·6	1·8

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Per cent.		73	27	59	41
South East					
Numbers '000s	59·6	41·7	17·9	11·0	6·9
Per cent.		70	30	61	39
London					
Numbers '000s	33·8	21·8	12·0	6·9	5·1
Per cent.		64	36	58	42
Scotland*					
Numbers '000s	25·0	15·1	9·9	4·4	5·5
Per cent.		60	40	44	56
Wales					
Numbers '000s	13·9	10·4	3·5	1·6	1·9
Per cent.		75	25	46	54

* Scottish figures for 1982-83 are not comparable with figures for the later years because of a change in the basis of calculation.

Careers service estimates of the destinations of school leavers by 31 December following the end of the school year
17 year olds 1984-85

Region	(a) Total (b+c)	(b) School/FE	(c) Labour market (d+e)	(d) Employed outside YTS	(e) Unemployed/YTS
Northern					
Numbers '000s	10·0	7·7	2·3	0·7	1·6
Per cent.		77	23	30	70
Yorks and Humber					
Numbers '000s	20·3	14·1	6·2	2·9	3·3
Per cent.		69	31	46	54
North West					
Numbers '000s	22·9	16·8	6·1	2·6	3·5
Per cent.		74	26	42	58
Midlands					
Numbers '000s	34·2	25·4	8·8	4·4	4·4
Per cent.		74	26	50	50
South West					
Numbers '000s	15·1	11·2	3·9	2·2	1·7
Per cent.		74	26	56	44
South East					
Numbers '000s	55·8	38·8	16·8	10·0	6·8
Per cent.		69	31	59	41
London					
Numbers '000s	32·7	21·3	11·4	6·4	5·0
Per cent.		65	35	56	44
Scotland*					
Numbers '000s	24·0	14·1	9·9	4·4	5·5
Per cent.		59	41	44	56
Wales					
Numbers '000s	14·0	10·3	3·7	1·6	2·1
Per cent.		74	26	43	57

* Scottish figures for 1982-83 are not comparable with figures for the later years because of a change in the basis of calculation.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the number of applications approved for the loan guarantee scheme and the total value of the sum guaranteed, together with the number of such guarantees which have been called in and the cost to the Exchequer of these payments.

Mr. Trippier: At 30 September 1985 16,396 guarantees, valued at £420·28 million, had been approved under the loan guarantee scheme. Of these 4,669 had been called at a cost of £111·8 million.

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General what has been the cost to public funds of the loan guarantee scheme in each year since its inception.

Mr. Trippier: The table shows the cost of the loan guarantee scheme in each completed financial year. The figures are based on the cost of called guarantees less premium income and recoveries and take no account of other Government income or expenditure which may be indirectly affected.

Financial Year	Net Cost (£ million)
1981-82	(Net gain) 0·375
1982-83	7·963
1983-84	23·746
1984-85	33·881

European Social Fund

Dr. Cunningham asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the criteria used by his Department in selecting projects for submission to the European Economic Community Commission for funding under the European Social Fund.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is our policy to submit all eligible applications to the social fund, in order to gain as much support as possible for United Kingdom training and job creation projects. Conditions for eligibility are contained in European Council Decisions and Regulations, last revised in 1983. Among the basic conditions are the schemes must be lawful in the member state, that they must secure matching funds from a public authority in the member state, and that they must provide training or create jobs for eligible categories of people. Copies of the fund rules were laid before the House at the time when they were agreed, and are also available on request from the Department.

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Paymaster General on what basis the figures for the numbers self employed are calculated; and what changes have been made in this classification since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates for the numbers of self employed are obtained from the censuses of population, the latest of which was held in 1981, updated by applying proportionate changes in self employment as estimated from the labour force survey.

The first change in methodology since 1979 was the use of labour force survey results to produce the new estimates for 1975 to 1979 which were published in January 1982 issue of *Employment Gazette*. The LFS data were used in place of the discontinued information from the national insurance card count.

At that time the level of staff employment was assumed by convention not to have changed since the date of the latest available survey data. When this convention was reviewed, in 1983, it was considered unrealistic. The reasons for this were set out in an article in the June 1983 edition of *Employment Gazette*. This article introduced a 'supplementary' series which assumed that the rate of growth observed between the latest two surveys for which data were available had continued thereafter. This series was revised—and the term 'supplementary' dropped—in July 1984 using results from the 1983 LFS.

The most recent revision was published in the March 1985 edition of *Employment Gazette*. This revision used the 1984 LFS results, and revised results for 1983. These estimates showed an exceptional growth in self employment between 1983 and 1984 and the Department's statisticians considered it inappropriate to assume that this rate had continued. The estimates for dates after June 1984, which will be reviewed when the 1985 LFS data become available next year, incorporate the assumption that average rate of increase between 1981 and 1984 is continuing.

Youth Training (Grants)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Paymaster General what representations he has had from local authorities who receive grants in arrears in respect of the youth training scheme and community programme, as compared with the private sector where such grants are paid in advance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has received representations from three local authorities expressing their concern about this matter in the past 12 months. The Government consider that the payment of grants in advance to local authority sponsors of youth training scheme and community programme projects would not be an appropriate use of taxpayers' money.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Strang asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received about cuts in the Health and Safety Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last three months my right hon. Friend, the previous Secretary of State for Employment, has met a delegation from the TUC to discuss the Health and Safety Executive's manpower and resources. Two letters have also been received.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Strang asked the Paymaster General how many health and safety inspectors were in post at the end of September; and what were the comparable figures for the previous six quarters.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of inspectors in post in the Health and Safety Executive at 1 October 1985 and for the previous six quarters were:

	Number
1 April 1984	1,239
1 July 1984	1,238
1 October 1984	1,253
1 January 1985	1,237
1 April 1985	1,266
1 July 1985	1,254
1 October 1985	1,244

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Refurbishment)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the cost of the refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster since the general election of 1983, including carpets, furnishings and telephones, and the cost of such refurbishing between 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Biffen: The table below gives details of expenditure by the Property Services Agency on the Palace of Westminster and its outbuildings for the financial years 1979-80 to 1982-83 inclusive and for the period from 1 April 1983 to 30 September 1985. For the costs of the new telephone installations, all of which have been incurred in the current financial year, I refer the hon. Member to the written reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 26 June, column *401*.

	New works	Maintenance and repairs (including stone restoration)	Furnishing
	£ million	£ million	£ million
1979-80 to 1982-83	3·612	14·025	3·395
1 April 1983 to 30 September 1985	2·845	14·256	2·267

The increase in the expenditure on maintenance and repairs is attributable in part to the fact that the figures are in cash and in part to the fact that more has been spent on stone restoration in the period since 1 April 1983.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish in the *Official Report* the result of his analysis of board and lodging in all local offices.

62. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the effect of the board and lodging regulations on job prospects of young people.

Board and Lodging Allowance

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the latest available figures since 29 April for the number of existing claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels, who were assessed under the new benefit regulations and who were *(a)* aged between 16 and 17 years, *(b)* aged between 18 and 20 years, *(c)* aged between 21 and 25 years, *(d)* aged between 26 years and pension age and *(e)* pensioners; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole and for England, Wales and Scotland, respectively;

(2) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and (b) claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in hostels, residential care homes and nursing homes, who were assessed under the new benefit regulations and whose accommodation charge was (i) above and (ii) within the new upper limits; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for England, Wales and Scotland, respectively;

(3) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and *(b)* claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels, who were 25 years old or under and who were assessed under the new benefit regulations as a result of which their benefit: (i) was restricted at the outset and (ii) was not restricted at the outset; and if he will give this information for Great Britain, and for England, Wales and Scotland, respectively;

(4) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and *(b)* claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels, who were assessed under the new benefit regulations and whose accommodation charge was (i) up to £5 above the upper limit, (ii) between £6 and £10 above the upper limit, (iii) between £11 and £20 above the upper limit, (iv) between £21 and £30 above the upper limit, (v) between £31 and £40 above the upper limit, (vi) between £41 and £50 above the upper limit and (vii) £51 or more above the upper limit, and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for England, Wales and Scotland, respectively;

(5) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and *(b)* claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in hostels, residential care home or nursing home accommodation, in the Taunton local Department of Health and Social Security office area who were 25 years old or under and were assessed under the new benefit regulations as a result of which their benefit (i) was restricted at the outset and (ii) was not restricted at the outset;

(6) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels, who were assessed under the new benefit regulations and who were *(a)* aged between 16 and 17 years, *(b)* aged between 18 and 20 years, *(c)* aged between 21 and 25 years, *(d)* aged between 26 years and pension age and *(e)* pensioners; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for England, Wales and Scotland, respectively;

(7) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and *(b)* claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in hostels, residential care homes and nursing homes, in the Brighton local Department of Health and Social Security office area who were assessed under the new benefit regulations and whose accommodation charge was (i) above and (ii) within the new upper limit;

(8) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and *(b)* claimants whose address changed and new and repeat claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels, who were 25 years old or under and who were assessed under the new benefit regulations as a result of which their benefit was restricted from the outset where (i) this restriction was lifted subsequently and (ii) this restriction was not lifted subsequently; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole and for England, Wales and Scotland, respectively.

(9) what are the latest available figures for the period since 29 April for the number of *(a)* existing claimants and *(b)* claimants whose address changed and new an repeat claimants of supplementary benefit, ordinary board and lodging allowance in the Aberystwyth local Department of Health and Social Security office area who were assessed

under the new benefit regulations ans whose accommodation charge was (i) up to £5, (ii) between £6 and £10, (iii) between £11 and £20, (iv) between £21 and £30, (v) between £31 and £40 and (vi) more than £41 above the new upper limit.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *47*]: The analysis of statistical returns on boarders from DHSS local offices is not yet complete. These returns were among the arrangements made to monitor the effects of the changes in supplementary benefit board and lodging payments which were introduced in April. In addition, special surveys of younger boarders have been carried out in Scotland and the south-east, local DHSS staff from all regions were asked during September about their experience of the operation of the regulations, and a study by the social security policy inspectorate is in progress.

Full information on the results of monitoring will be made available as soon as possible. Preliminary information is as follows. Between April and July 1985, 126,000 supplementary benefit claims were made by boarders in ordinary board and lodging. Half these claimants were 25 or under. In addition, 6,000 people aged 25 or under were living in hostels and claiming as boarders. Overall, 28 per cent. of those aged 16-25 were exempt from the application of time limits on benefit at the boarder rate. Half the ordinary boarders aged 25 or under were paying amounts within the new financial limits.

Indications from DHSS local offices are that apart from resort areas, where people apparently returned home, most of those affected by time limits stayed in the same area and received benefit at the householder or non-householder rate. Local offices also report in general a continuing supply of accommodation within the new financial limits —in some cases at reduced prices.

A survey of 2,350 claimants under 26 in the south-east showed 20 per cent. were exempt from time limits. A further 35 per cent. remained in the same accommodation, mainly at the non-householder rate of benefit. 15 per cent. moved to other accommodation (less than 2 per cent. of these as boarders). 25 per cent. ceased to claim supplementary benefit altogether (some of them because their entitlement to unemployment benefit exceeded their entitlement to supplementary benefit). A smaller Scottish survey showed a roughly comparable picture and there are similar indications from other areas. Monitoring results so far do not appear to substantiate suggestions of significant movement between board and lodging areas or of increased homelessness.

Of those claimants whom the early monitoring results show to have ceased to claim benefit, a significant number are thought to have obtained work.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures since 29 April for the number of claimants of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance, excluding those living in hostels, residential care homes and nursing homes, who were assessed under the new benefit rules and who were *(a)* aged 26 years or over and *(b)* aged 25 years or under, whose accommodation charge was within the new upper limits and who were receiving a special addition to their benefit; and if he will give this information for Great Britain as a whole, and for England, Scotland and Wales, respectively.

Mr. Newton: None, as special additions are payable only to claimants whose accommodation charge exceeds the local limits.

Local Authority Provision

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to establish a statutory national inspectorate to monitor local authority social services provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No, but I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 25 February, at columns *75-76* to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames).

Pre-School Playgroups

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children were attending pre-school playgroups in England and Wales for each year from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information for England is given in the table. Further details are given in the Department's publication "Children's Day Care Facilities (at 31 March)", copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

England—Provision of Playgroups for Children Under Five

As at 31 March	*Number of Places*				*Number of Children**	
	Local Authority Playgroups	*Registered Playgroups*	*Other Playgroups*	*Total*	*On Register of Local Authority Playgroups*	*Sponsored by Local Authorities in Registered Playgroups*
1979	3,325	362,279	†	†		5,110
1980	2,865	365,003	†	†	2,455	4,474
1981	3,199	364,778	†	†	2,518	4,170
1982	2,669	‡366,649	4,971	374,289	‡2,715	5,182
1983	2,902	379,488	5,383	387,773	3,100	7,057
1984	2,692	384,523	6,625	393,840	2,968	9,132

* Data available centrally only for the two categories shown.
† not available.
‡ revised.
‖ data available but not reliable.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many places were available in day nurseries in England and Wales in 1984 and in each year since 1979;

(2) what information he has as to which local authorities have reduced the number of places in day nurseries since 1979; and what has been the percentage reduction in each case.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the provision of day nursery places in England is given in the table together with a list of those authorities whose level of provision has decreased between 1979 and 1984. Further details are given in the Department's booklets "Children's Day Care Facilities (at 31 March)" copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

England—Provision of Day Nurseries for Children under Five

As at 31 March	*Number of Places*			
	Local authority day nurseries	*Registered day nurseries*	*Other day nurseries*	*Total*
1979	28,313	22,381	*	*
1980	28,437	22,017	*	*
1981	28,252	22,031	*	*
1982	†28,383	21,131	775	51,049
1983	28,630	21,889	736	51,255
1984	28,872	23,124	805	52,801

*Data not available.
†Revised.

Local authorities whose level of provision in local authority day nurseries has decreased between 1979 and 1984

Local authority	*Number of places*		*Percentage decrease*
	1979	*1984*	
Cleveland	400	250	37
Durham	150	125	17
South Tyneside	200	152	24
Humberside	55	50	9
Calderdale	138	85	38
Wakefield	90	24	73
Cheshire	510	490	4
Bolton	240	188	22
Oldham	233	203	13
Trafford	408	240	41
Knowsley	400	350	13
Wirral	220	210	5
Shropshire	4	0	100
Coventry	534	394	26
Walsall	150	120	20
Nottinghamshire	640	585	9
Berkshire	132	124	6
Hertfordshire	417	335	20
Oxfordshire	95	90	5
Suffolk	63	55	13
Wandsworth	746	623	16
Westminster	525	469	11
Barking	145	130	10
Bexley	50	45	10
Ealing	359	342	5
Harrow	118	110	7
Havering	190	120	11
Merton	139	119	14
Newham	274	250	9
Redbridge	100	70	30
Richmond upon Thames	141	125	11
Hampshire	357	315	12
Kent	35	15	57
Surrey	214	205	4
East Sussex	196	108	45
Devon	79	18	77
Gloucestershire	75	32	57

Medical Practitioners

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many registered National Health Service medical practitioners have been *(a)* suspended, *(b)* struck off the register and *(c)* restored to the register in each of the years since the coming into force of the Medical Act 1978, and if he will express these figures as a percentage of the number of registered National Health Service registered practitioners in each year.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Medical Act 1978 came into operation on 1 August 1980. Data supplied by the General Medical Council do not readily distinguish between doctors in National Health Service and in other practice. Readily available figures are in the following table.

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Suspensions from the Medical Register *(a)*	5	10	10	9	16
Erasures from the Medical Register (1)	4	4	4	11	11
Restoration to the Medical Register (1)	1	3	—	1	3
Doctors in NHS practice (2)	73,750	75,150	76,410	77,725	*

* Not available.

Notes:
1. Source: GMC.
2. Source: DHSS—(GB figures excluding Northern Ireland).

General Practitioners (Absent Partners)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what rules *(a)* his Department and *(b)* family practitioner committees lay down concerning the procedures to be adopted by general practitioners when their partners are away, and what steps he takes to satisfy himself as to the efficiency of such procedures.

Mr. Hayhoe: The terms of service of a general medical practitioner require him to inform his family practitioner committee, when he proposes to be absent from his practice for more than one week, of the name of the doctor or doctors responsible for his practice during his absence. Additionally, before entering into arrangements with a deputising service for the provision of a deputy or deputies, a doctor must obtain the consent of the committee. The Department has issued guidance to family practitioner committees on the monitoring of deputising services and they have been asked to report on the steps they are taking in their 1985-86 annual programmes.

Private Practitioners (Refresher Courses)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which refresher courses are obligatory for doctors engaged in private practice, and when these were last reviewed.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are no such obligatory refresher courses.

General Practitioners (Training)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to satisfy himself as to the adequacy of the post qualification training of general practitioners.

Mr. Hayhoe: The standards of training and performance of general practitioners are governed by the corporate bodies of the profession. Medical graduates in order to become principals in general medical practice are required to undertake a three-year period of vocational training as specified in regulations or to have equivalent experience.

Medical Practitioners (Qualifications)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of representations made by the General Medical Council to the Privy Council under the various acts relating to qualifying examinations for National Health Service medical practitioners since 1978 and as to what action was taken as a result.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand that the Privy Council has had only one representation since 1978 about qualifying examinations under the Medical Act 1978. As a result, the University of Leicester was entitled to award primary qualifications registrable under the Act.

Community Dental Services

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been examined by the community dental services in each of the years 1965 to 1984; and how many fillings have been made to *(a)* their temporary teeth and *(b)* their permanent teeth, in each year.

Mr. Hayhoe: Details of the numbers of inspections and fillings provided to children in England in each of the years 1965 to 1984 are shown in the table.

thousands

	Number of inspections	*Number of fillings*	
		deciduous teeth	*permanent teeth*
1965	3,938	699	1,851
1966	4,039	788	1,880
1967	4,166	854	1,889
1968	4,261	898	1,898
1969	4,358	957	1,967
1970	4,475	1,022	2,045
1971	4,638	1,108	2,176
1972	4,843	1,145	2,207
1973	4,940	1,138	2,193
1974	4,803	1,097	2,151
1975	4,835	1,053	2,089
1976	4,750	1,037	2,079
1977	4,980	973	1,952
1978	5,244	938	1,812
1979	5,285	881	1,716
1980	5,397	844	1,613
1981	5,359	770	1,440
1982	5,421	721	1,265
1983	5,450	670	1,085
1984*	5,718	683	981

* provisional figures

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the value of the supplementary benefit scale rates, excluding payment for housing costs, for a couple with two children, one aged under five years and one aged five to 10 years, as a proportion of average net male earnings for each year since 1971.

Mr. Major: The information requested is given in the following table.

*Date**	*Scale rates as percentage of average net male earnings†‡*
September 1971	47·0
October 1972	45·5
October 1973	45·5
July 1974	47·6
April 1975	46·7
November 1975	48·6
November 1976	50·0
November 1977	50·4
November 1978	45·9
November 1979	46·0
November 1980	47·2
November 1981	47·6
November 1982	49·2
November 1983	47·5
November 1984‖	45·7

* Dates scale rates up-rated.

† From and including November 1979 an age-related heating addition in respect of a child under five years of age is included.

‡ Net average weekly earnings are the estimates of gross weekly full-time earnings of adult males (aged 21 and over up to November 1982 and from November 1983 all males on adult rates) whose earnings are not affected by absence, less tax and national insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate plus Family Allowance/Child Benefit (which is off-set against the supplementary benefit scale rates).

‖ Provisional.

Benefits

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the main social security benefits which are not covered by a Government commitment to increase rates in line with inflation, together with an estimate of the cost of each 1 per cent. increase in their rates in 1986.

Mr. Newton: The following benefits are not covered by a commitment to increase rates in line with inflation:

Unemployment benefit.
Sickness benefit.
Maternity allowance.
Child benefit.
One parent benefit.
Family income supplement.
Mobility allowance.
Supplementary allowance (ie supplementary benefit for people under pension age).
Housing benefit.

The cost of a 1 per cent. increase in these benefits would be £170 million at November 1985 benefit rates.

Food Hazards

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if consideration has been given to improving procedures for notifying local authorities of food hazards, with special reference to the capacity of local authorities to react quickly after notification of an emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The procedure for communicating food hazard warnings to local authorities is kept under review and we are satisfied that the arrangements for urgent notification by way of a telephone link system, followed by written amplification, is the most efficient at present available. The extent of local action is a matter for local authorities to decide on receipt by them of the telephoned notification. Full regard is had by the Department to the problems which may be faced by local authorities — especially if the notification is received just before a weekend or a holiday: but in practice we have little choice about timing once investigations have established that urgent action is necessary in the public interest.

Mineworkers (National Insurance Contributions)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he is having about the position of those mineworkers who are being declared redundant yet, because they have not paid their national insurance contributions for 12 months, are likely to lose unemployment benefit and entitlement from the redundant mineworkers' pension scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Entitlement to unemployment benefit depends upon the claimant having paid or been credited with the necessary national insurance contributions during the relevant tax year. Those miners who were on strike for all or most of the 1984-85 tax year are, therefore, unlikely to qualify for benefit during 1986. We have no plans to change the contribution conditions in order to allow unemployment benefit to be paid in these circumstances. The Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total funds available for health in the current year and the part thereof devoted to all aspects of mental health.

Mr. Hayhoe: Total spending on the Health Service in England this year will be about £14·5 billion. It is not possible to say how much of this will be spent on mental health services. However, details of past health authority revenue spending on services for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people is shown annually in the Department's evidence to the Social Services Select Committee for its enquiry into public expenditure on social services. The latest information was published in July 1985 in its sixth report: Public Expenditure on the Social Services (HC. 339).

Fairfield Hospital

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates to be (i) the current cost of keeping a patient in Fairfield hospital and (ii) the cost of caring for such patients when they are transferred to smaller units of accommodation.

Mr. Whitney: The average daily cost in the year ending 31 March 1985 of treating inpatients in Fairfield hospital was £30·27. No estimates are available centrally of what would be the cost of caring for Fairfield patients in smaller units of accommodation. This will vary according to local circumstances and the type of patient.

Home Helps

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will specify the number of local authorities which currently offer a free home help service *(a)* to all who receive a service, *(b)* to those on supplementary benefit or *(c)* to people on the basis of the means test.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected by the Department.

Conductive Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State of Social Services (1) what representations his Department has received from *(a)* parents of children with special needs and *(b)* voluntary organisations concerning the provision of conductive education; and if he will make a statement; (2) if his Department has any plans to fund *(a)* research into and *(b)* programmes of conductive education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received two letters this year from parents about conductive education for their children and our attention has been drawn to the Conductive Education Interest Group. We are at present considering applications for funding from two voluntary organisations keen to study or explore conductive education and are liaising closely with the Department of Education and Science.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the number of persons claiming supplementary benefit and *(b)* the number of children

estimated to be dependent on those claimants, in each of the nine local offices of his Department which serve the London borough of Southwark in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Major: The total numbers of people receiving supplementary benefits from the nine local offices serving the London borough of Southwark from 1979 to 1985 are set out in the table.

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Peckham	5,549	5,911	6,887	7,897	8,552	9,300	9,952
Thames South	420	483	561	576	680	675	716
Southwark	*6,697	*7,134	*8,312	9,531	10,275	11,410	12,146
Camberwell	*6,442	*6,863	*7,996	9,169	10,378	11,303	11,986
Kennington Park	*7,124	*7,499	*7,896	*8,310	8,748	9,331	10,093
Kennington Area Office	5,940	6,318	7,876	8,877	9,745	10,195	11,938
Brixton	5,500	6,200	8,067	9,027	9,791	11,423	12,028
Lewisham	7,196	7,532	8,598	11,049	11,729	12,223	12,998
Crystal Palace	6,521	6,657	7,903	9,197	9,512	10,472	11,341

* Estimated figures

Source: 100 per cent count of cases in action in July each year

Information is not available from which reliable estimates could be made of the number of children dependent on people claiming at individual offices but I refer the hon. Member to the estimates in the reply I gave her on 21 October, at columns *52-53*.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in advance of the consideration by the House of the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous and Temporary Provisions Regulations 1985, he will make available to hon. Members a statement of the legal basis and considerations on which he drew up the draft regulations.

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Member will be aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has been invited to discuss this matter today with the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, following its report to the House last week.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the costs of meeting mortgage interest payments for claimants of supplementary benefit, other than the unemployed, breaking these down into one-parent families, the sick and disabled and pensioners, and showing how many persons in each category benefit.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1985, c. *55*.]: I regret that I said incorrectly that a copy of the 1983 annual statistical inquiry was held in the Library. I apologise for this mistake. The latest tables in the Library are the 1982 tables; for 1983 tables will be deposited at the end of November.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give *(a)* the number, proportion, average pay and average earnings of men working (i) full-time and (ii) part-time and *(b)* the number, proportion, average pay and average earnings of women working (i) full-time and (ii) part-time in each of the 18 ancillary pay groups within the National Health Service grading structure.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Stanley Royd Hospital (Inquiry Report)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the inquiry into the 19 deaths from salmonella poisoning at the Stanley Royd psychiatric hospital in Wakefield; if he will publish the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 15 July at column *53*.

NHS Hospitals (Food Poisoning and Crown Immunity)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many cases of food poisoning have been reported in National Health Service hospitals in each of the last five years: which hospitals were involved; and how many of those affected died in each year;

(2) if he will list all the types of premises for which he is responsible in respect of which Crown immunity is claimed.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

NHS (Griffiths Review)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the progress of the implementation of the Griffith's review; how many managers from outside the National Health Service have been appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Implementation is progressing well. All regional health authorities and 189 (of 191) district health authorities have appointed general managers. At regional level 15 per cent. are from outside the National Health Service, and at district level 21 per cent. About 25 per cent. of general manager appointments at unit level have also now been made. Of these 10 per cent. are from outside the Health Service. A further 35 per cent. are front line professional staff: doctors, nurses, therapists and dentists who have decided to use the opportunity presented by Griffiths and put their knowledge and experience of treating patients to use in the wider interests of the Service as a whole.

National Radiological Protection Board

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the members of the National Radiological Protection Board together with their qualifications.

Mr. Whitney: The information is as follows:

Sir Frederick Dainton, FRS PhD ScD MA *(Chairman)*
A. M. Allen, Esq., MA
Professor R. J. Berry, MD, FRCP, FRCR, MCPS
Professor H. J. Evans, FRSE, PhD
Professor K. T. Evans, FRCP, FRCR
Dr. J. W. Laws, FRCP, FRCR
Professor J. S. Orr, FRSE, DSc, FInstP
Dr. R. Owen, MB, ChB
Professor D. W. Pearce, MA
D. H. Roberts, Esq., FRS, BSc, FEng, FInstP, MIEE
Professor Sir Richard Southwood, FRS, PhD, DSc MA, FIBiol
Professor D. J. Weatherall, FRS, MD, FRCP, FRCPE, FRCPath, MA

Sir Frederick Dainton retires on 31 October 1985. Professor Sir Richard Southwood has been appointed Chairman from 1 November 1985.

Hospital Induced Infection

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the types of illnesses which National Health Service patients have suffered arising from hospital induced infections and food poisoning.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not available in the form requested. However, in the 1981 Public Health Laboratory Service study the major systems affected by hospital acquired infection were the urinary, upper and lower respiratory, wound and skin infections. Illnesses derived from food poisoning might include gastro-enteritis, bacteremia and diarrhoeal illness.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of patients who have acquired *(a)* serious and *(b)* minor hospital-induced infections in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information on which to base such an estimate is not available.

NHS Hospitals (Pest Infestation)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of pest infestation in National Health Service hospitals have been reported in each of the last five years; and if he will ask regional health authorities to update their information and send him full details.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities are not required to report cases of pest infestation. We are considering with regional health authorities what further action is needed to ensure that satisfactory hygiene standards are maintained in the National Health Service.

NHS (Catering Services)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will arrange for a copy of the Coopers & Lybrand report on catering services to be deposited in the Library.

Mr. Hayhoe: This report has not yet been issued to health authorities. When it is I will arrange for a copy to be deposited in the Library.

Medicines (Product Licence)

Mr. Crouch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many medicines containing a new chemical entity and granted a product licence in 1984, will be subject to the licence of right provisions contained in the Patents Act 1977.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret this information is not available.

Michelle Bartlett

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an inquiry into the case of Michelle Bartlett who was in the care of the social services department of the London borough of Wandsworth at the children's home, Wilna Road, Wandsworth.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to the reply*, 24 July 1985, c. *601*]: The death of Michelle Bartlett was the subject of a coroner's inquest on 16 July 1985 at which a verdict of death due to misadventure was recorded and subsequently the subject of a full report to Wandsworth social services committee by the Director of Social Services, which was then made public. Wandsworth has taken action on a number of points raised in the report to further strengthen its procedures in such cases. In view of this, we do not consider that a further inquiry is necessary.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, county by county for England, the number and proportion of people classified as *(a)* drinking to excess, *(b)* problem drinkers and *(c)* severely dependent drinkers for each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 October 1985, c. *131*]: Information is not available centrally under these particular classifications but the information in the table may be of help to the hon. Member. In addition there are about 2·5 thousand in-patient cas es treated annually in non-psychiatric hospitals in England with a main diagnosis of alcohol dependence syndrome.

Admissions to mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of alcohol dependence syndrome† England

Region of Residence	*1982**	*1983*	*1984*
England	12,032	12,041	12,111
Northern	767	917	836
Yorkshire	822	819	796
Trent	646	595	524
East Anglian	223	289	334
North West Thames	1,019	946	996
North East Thames	726	719	728
South East Thames	544	685	846
South West Thames	988	1,086	990
Wessex	632	716	731
Oxford	658	494	611
South Western	460	448	542
West Midlands	849	898	889
Mersey	522	498	567
North Western	1,256	1,304	1,413
Not known	1,920	1,627	1,308

* Data for 1980 and 1981 are not available in this form.
† International Classification of Diseases, category 303.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to seek to persuade more women in high risk categories to obtain cervical cancer screening.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985, c. *284*]: Computerised systems to identify and call up women will help considerably. Health authorities have been advised to plan their implementation. Further suggestions on how to reach women most at risk are included in a consultative paper on practical steps to improve the screening programme which will be issued shortly.

Dental Treatment for Mothers

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will extend the exemption from dental charges to those women who have borne a child in such a way that the exemption period for dental treatment extends to the end of the month in which the child's first birthday falls;

(2) if he will introduce a special item into the dental fee scale to pay for preventive advice for expectant and nursing mothers concerning the care of children's teeth and the prevention of dental disease;

(3) if he will remove the prior approval conditions under items 3 and 5 of the dental fee scale for pregnant women and for those who have borne a child within the previous 12 months;

(4) if he has any plans to extend exemption from dental charges to women who become pregnant during a course of dental treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985]: The dental fee scale already provides for additional advice and additional treatment under item *3(a)* to be given without prior approval to expectant and nursing mothers. I have no plans to make further special provision in the fee scale, to relax the prior approval arrangements nor to alter the rules relating to exemption from dental charges for this group of patients.

Mental Hospitals (Patient Education)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on existing and future provision of education for patients in mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: It is for the health and local authorities concerned to arrange for adults in long-stay mental hospitals to receive appropriate education and training. The provision of facilities for the education of all children is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

NHS (Crown Immunity)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of Crown immunity, especially in relation to National Health Service hospitals and other National Health Service properties.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am most concerned at recent reports of poor hygiene standards in National Health Service hospitals and urgent management action to secure any necessary improvements is being taken. Representations calling for the lifting of Crown immunity from the National Health Service are also being carefully considered.

Residential Care Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by authority *(a)* the number of persons over 65 years, *(b)* the number of registered residential care homes in (i) the local authority sector, (ii) the voluntary sector and (iii) the private sector and *(c)* the number of places in each of these categories for each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Student Awards

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that the determination of the supplementary rate of grants in connection with student mandatory awards in education is made at a time in the year which will minimise delay by education authorities in paying student grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iran and Iraq (Armaments)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government governing the exportation of armaments to Iran and Iraq.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The United Kingdom has been strictly impartial in the conflict between Iran and Iraq and has refused to allow the supply of lethal defence equipment to either side. In order to reinforce our policy of doing everything possible to see this tragic conflict brought to the earliest possible end, we decided in December 1984 to apply thereafter, the following set of guidelines to all deliveries of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq:

(i) We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side;

(ii) Subject to that overriding consideration, we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations;

(iii) We should not, in future, approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict;

(iv) In the line with this policy, we should continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences for the supply of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq.

Nicaragua

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to offer United Kingdom mediation for bilateral negotiations between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and Nicaragua and Honduras aimed at peaceful resolution of the armed conflict between Nicaragua and

Contra guerillas, or to propose the offer of Western European mediation at the forthcoming ministerial meeting in Luxembourg.

Mr. Rifkind: No. We and our European partners consider that the Contadora process and an agreement based on the 21 Contadora objectives is the best opportunity to achieve a comprehensive political solution to the crisis of the region. A major aim of the Luxembourg meeting is to support the Contadora group's efforts.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call on the United States Government to restart the Manzanillo talks with Nicaragua.

Mr. Rifkind: It is for the United States to decide when to resume those talks.

Contadora Peace Initiative

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position of the Contadora peace initiative in central America.

Mr. Rifkind: The central American states are continuing to negotiate on the basis of a revised draft of the Contadora Act presented to them by the Contadora group on 12-13 September in Panama City.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will propose at the forthcoming ministerial summit in Luxembourg any western European initiative to assist the Contadora process in central America;

(2) what measures have been taken within the past 12 months following the conclusions of the San Jose ministerial conference, held in September 1984, about the Community, Portugal, Spain and the group of central American countries developing, extending and diversifying their mutual trade to increase bilateral trade between Britain and Nicaragua;

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress achieved in implementing the decisons of the ministerial conference held in San Jose in September 1984; and if he will detail Her Majesty's Government's contribution to this progress;

(4) whether he is satisfied with the progress made in implementing the decisions of the ministerial conference held in San Jose in September 1984; and if he will be making any proposals to strengthen the implementation of these decisions at the forthcoming ministerial conference in Luxembourg on 11 and 12 November.

Mr. Rifkind: Our policy towards Central America is designed to support the efforts of the Contadora group to promote conditions of political stability in which the fundamental social and economic problems of the region can be tackled.

Since the San Jose meeting, we have been working with our European partners to ensure that the follow-up conference to be held in Luxembourg on 11-12 November will fulfil the commitment entered into at San Jose to promote stronger economic and political relations between the two regions. We and our partners have remained in close touch with the Governments of central America and the Contadora states. Arrangements for regular political dialogue between the two regions are likely to be agreed at the Luxembourg meeting in November.

In parallel, the European Commission in consultation with members of the Community and the central American countries, have been examining how best to strengthen economic links between the two regions. An economic framework agreement on the lines envisaged in the San Jose communiqué has been negotiated. It is hoped that this will be signed at the Luxembourg meeting. The agreement will include provision for additional EC aid to central America. The additional aid will have the objective of promoting inter-regional integration and the development of central America as a whole.

Raoul Wallenburg

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, col. *204*, concerning the documentation of the alleged death of Mr. Raoul Wallenburg, he will seek to acquire a copy of the manuscript report by the head of the prison medical service, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Since this report pertains to the death of a Swedish citizen, we would have no locus in asking to see it. The Russians claim that the full text of the report is contained in the Soviet note of 1957 handed to the Swedish ambassador. The Swedish authorities have confirmed to us that on various occasions they have asked for sight of the original to confirm this, but the Soviet Union has not agreed.

Soviet Jews

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the monthly figures of those Soviet Jews who have *(a)* not been allowed and *(b)* have been allowed to emigrate in the current year.

Mr. Rifkind: Neither we nor any organisations concerned with Jewry with whom we have been in touch have been able to give a reliable figure for the number of Soviet Jews refused exit permission in 1985. Nor would such a figure of itself reflect the undoubtedly large number of Soviet Jews who would like to emigrate if they saw the chance of being permitted to do so. The monthly figures for those who have been granted exit visas this year are as follows:

	Number
January	61
February	88
March	98
April	166
May	51
June	36
July	174
August	29
September	93

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the representations he has made to the Soviet Union on behalf of those Soviet Jews who have applied for emigration and been refused, what is the latest estimate of those in this category and what reasons are given by the Soviet Union in his discussions for the refusals.

Mr. Rifkind: I raised the question of restrictions on Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union with the Soviet

First Deputy Foreign Minister during my visit to Moscow in July. I mentioned the specific cases of Roald Zelichenok and Anatoly Shcharansky. My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned a range of Soviet failures to observe commitments made under the Helsinki final act at the CSCE anniversary meeting in Helsinki, 30 July to 1 August. Recently, the Soviet response to questions about Soviet Jewry has generally been that the vast majority of those wishing to leave the Soviet Union have already done so. It is not possible to give a figure for the total number of Jews who have been refused exit permission. In 1983 the Israeli Government suggested that there might be around 10,000 Jewish refuseniks in the USSR, but we have no independent information against which to judge the reliability of this figure.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has in mind to draw attention to the Soviet Union that its constant refusal to allow Soviet Jews to emigrate is in breach of the Helsinki agreement, especially on the sections dealing with human rights, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In his speech to the CSCE 10th anniversary commemorative meeting this summer, my right hon. and learned Friend made clear our regret at Eastern failure to live up to their human rights commitments under the Helsinki final act. I am placing a copy of that speech in the Library of the House. My right hon. and learned Friend also raised human rights with Mr. Shevardnadze bilaterally in Helsinki. We shall continue to take all appropriate opportunites to remind the Soviet Union of our wish to see full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Soviet Union, in accordance with its UN and Helsinki commitments.

Falkland Islands (Fishing)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is currently being taken by Her Majesty's Government to prevent fishing by foreign vessels in the waters around the Falkland Islands, and if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of such measures.

Mr. Rifkind: We are continuing our efforts to bring about the establishment of a multilaterally-based fisheries conservation and management regime in the south Atlantic. The aim of such a regime would be to manage fish stocks and to control the activities of fishing vessels in these waters.

British Sikhs

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Indian Government seeking a relaxation of visa requirements as they affect Sikhs who are British citizens and who wish to visit relatives in India.

Mr. Rifkind: It would be invidious to request special treatment for any category of British citizens. We have on several occasions drawn the attention of the Indian Government to the practical consequences of their visa regime for British travellers, and expressed the hope that the regime may be lifted as conditions in Punjab return to normal.

Hong Kong

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether a decision has been taken on the form of the annual report on Hong Kong and the date on which it is to be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. The first annual report on Hong Kong will be published as a White Paper and we hope to lay it before Parliament in December.

CIVIL SERVICE

Disabled Persons

63. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the current percentage level of employment of registered disabled persons in the Home Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: As at 1 June 1985 1·4 per cent of members of the Home Civil Service were registered disabled persons.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Industrial and Public Service Staff

64. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what sectors of industry or public services have increased their numbers in employment since 1979 as a direct result of Government investment.

Mr. MacGregor: Detailed information on the labour content of all Government investment is not readily available. Government investment expenditure is assessed in terms of its expected rates of return and in relation to the objectives of the investment. This will not necessarily involve an assessment of employment effects. Input-output tables for 1979, prepared by the Central Statistical Office, may be used to obtain information on the average labour intensity of different categories of expenditure.

Airlines

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost of the investigation by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise into the reimportation by airlines of towelettes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: The re-importation of these products is dealt with as part of customs' general control over the warehousing, shipment and return of aircraft stores, and no breakdown of costs is kept.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise searches into airlines' in-flight bars.

Mr. Gow: The control of aircraft in-flight bars forms part of customs' general control over the warehousing, shipment and return of aircraft stores and no breakdown of costs is kept.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what annual revenue is derived from fines levied on airlines where in-flight bar stocks are wrongly declared.

Mr. Gow: I regret that this information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. If my hon. Friend has a particular point in mind, and will write to me, I shall help in any way that I can.

Community Trade Mark Office

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Treasury financial support for the proposed Community Trade Mark office in London.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology on 8 November 1984 [Vol. 67, c. 6]. I should like to acknowledge the further helpful work contained in the recent study commissioned by the Community Trade Mark Office Committee.

South African Debt

Dame Judith Hart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Bank of England on the subject of South African debt.

Mr. Lawson: I have regular discussions with the Governor of the Bank of England on a range of issues including South African debt.

Housing Improvements (VAT)

Mr. Geoff Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total receipts collected by his Department from the value added tax on housing improvements in the last fiscal year.

Mr. Gow [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985]: Businesses registered for value added tax are not required to make returns of the tax charged on particular supplies of goods or services and information of this kind is therefore not directly available. However, estimates of personal sector expenditure on improvements to dwellings suggest that the yield from value added tax in the fiscal year 1984-85 was of the order of £300 million.

Unemployment Trends

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on recent reports on the likely trends of unemployment in the United Kingdom during 1986 contained in documents issued by the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985]: Neither the OECD nor the IMF expect UK unemployment levels in 1986 to change significantly from those in 1985. According to well-established convention the Government do not publish their own forecasts of unemployment.

ENERGY

CEGB and Electricity Council

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the members of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the Electricity Council, together with their qualifications and, in the case of part-time members, their full-time occupations.

Mr. Goodlad: The details are as follows:

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY GENERATING BOARD (CEGB)

Chairman—Lord Marshall of Goring, Kt, CBE, FRS, PhD, BSc, FBIM.

Deputy Chairman—F. E. Bonner, CBE, BSc(Econ), DPA, FCA, JDipMA, IPFA, CBIM.

Full-time members — G. A. W. Blackman, CBE, CEng, FIMechE, FInstF, CBIM, J. W. Baker, MA., D. A. Davis, BSc(ENG), CEng, MIMechE., *Part-time members* — R. M. Dantzic, CA. (A director of Wood Mackenzie & Co. Ltd.), R. V. Giordano, BA, LLB, (Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the BOC Group plc.) Sir Eric Sharp, CBE, BSc(Econ), CBIM. (Chairman and Chief Executive of Cable & Wireless plc.)

ELECTRICITY COUNCIL

Chairman—T. P. Jones, CB, BA, CBIM.

Deputy Chairman — A. Plumpton, CBE, BSc, CEng, FIEE, FRSA, CBIM, FCIBS.

Full-time members—R. W. Orson, CBE, BSc(Econ), FSS, R. A. Farrance, BSc(Econ), FIPM, D. G. C. Gronow, PhD, MSc.

Ex-officio members (Chairmen of the twelve Area Electricity Boards and the Chairman of the CEGB)—D. G. Jefferies, CEng, FIEE, CBIM, G. A. Squair, CEng, MIEE, MBIM, D. A. Ross, BSc, CEng, MIEE, MBIM, K. F. Whittle, BSc(Tech), CEng, FIEE, CBIM, J. C. Smith, DRC, CEng, CBIM, FRSE, J. F. Harris, CEng, DIPEEng, FIEE, MBIM, J. J. Wilson, BSc, CEng, FIEE, CBIM, J. W. Evans, MA, FBCS, B. H. Weston, CEng, MIEE, FBIM, J. Porteous, BSc, CEng, FIEE, FInstE, T. Rutherford, CBE, BSc, CEng, FIEE, B. R. Hastings, BSc, Lord Marshall of Goring.

Designated CEGB representatives—F. E. Bonner, G. A. W. Blackman.

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the estimated total costs of decommissioning the Magnox nuclear reactors presently in operation.

Mr. Goodlad: Total costs will depend on the method of decommissioning that is chosen, but estimates of the cost of decommissioning a typical Magnox reactor were given in my reply on 23 July to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) at column *469*.

PRIME MINISTER

Soviet Union

Q12. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the general secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

General Belgrano

Q70. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received, following the publication of the Foreign Affairs Committee report on the circumstances of the sinking of the General Belgrano, on the matters raised in the report.

The Prime Minister: The issue was raised on a number of occasions in this House and another place in the week immediately following the publication of the Report and again by the hon. Gentleman on 22 October at c. *109*. I have received a small number of letters from members of the public.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what headway has been made on Her Majesty's Government's multilateral initiative on a Falkland Islands fisheries conservation and management regime; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are continuing their efforts to bring about the establishment of a multilaterally-based fisheries conservation and management regime in the south Atlantic. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary made clear the Government's support for the Food and Agriculture Organisation's constructive initiative in this field and his hope that Argentina would be prepared to work with the Food and Agriculture Organisation, too.

Agriculture (Research and Advisory Services)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Prime Minister if she will publish a table showing, on a directly comparable basis, the spending of the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, respectively, on agricultural research and advisory services, with particular reference to the comparison between the relevant parts of the budget of the agricultural development and advisory service and of the Scottish agricultural colleges.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on research and development, excluding food science, fisheries and flood protection, totalled £90·4 million in 1983-84 of which expenditure by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service was £39·8 million. Total comparable expenditure by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland in 1983-84 was £27·8 million of which expenditure at the Scottish agricultural colleges was £6·8 million.

Expenditure by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on advisory services provided by ADAS was estimated at £37·3 million in 1983-84. Expenditure by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland on advisory services in agriculture in the Scottish colleges was £7·2 million.

Engagements

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Contract Compliance

Mr. Dubs asked the Prime Minister what is the Government's policy about contract compliance.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is to get the best value for the taxpayers' money.

Commonwealth Conference

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent visit to the Bahamas.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to the Lord Privy Seal's reply*, 21 October 1985, col. *11*]: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement to the House this afternoon.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Audio and Video Tape Recording

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will estimate the administrative costs both of collection and distribution of a levy on audio and video recording tapes as recommended by his Department's Green Paper, the "Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material", and the proportion this would represent of total levy revenue.

Mr. Butcher: The Green Paper made it clear that the Government would approve a scheme for collection and distribution of a levy only if satisfied that it would operate fairly and on an economical basis. The decision whether or not to introduce a levy on blank recording tape will take account of all relevant factors, including administrative costs. We hope soon to publish a White Paper dealing with copyright law reform and announcing our conclusions on the levy question.

Silentnight Ltd.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any grants have been made by his Department to Silentnight Ltd. in the last four years.

Mr. Butcher: Information about some of the grants made by the Department is published quarterly in "British Business". For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not the usual practice to give any further information about grants to particular companies. "British Business of 22 June 1983 recorded an offer of regional selective assistance of £350,000 to Lay E Zee Ltd., a subsidiary of Silentnight Holdings.

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give an assurance that his Department, in co-operation with local authorities where appropriate, will ensure that information technology centres received the necessary funding to maintain their operations during the current and the next financial years.

Mr. Butcher: Those ITeCs which remain eligible for DTI pump priming assistance of up to £75,000 will continue to receive my Department's support during this and the coming financial year. Together with the Manpower Services Commission and other Departments concerned with ITeCS, my Department is currently considering the funding arrangements to operate from 1 April 1986.

Innovative Projects (Government Funding)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what funding Her Majesty's Government make available for innovative schemes in the current financial year; what is the total dispersed to date; and if he will list the major projects supported.

Mr. Butcher: Support offered by my Department for science and technology and investment in innovation will amount to around £420 million this financial year, of which under half has already been disbursed. The main areas of support are information technology, including the

Alvey programme, the development and application of microelectronics, advanced manufacturing technology and aerospace R and D.

Chrome

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the implications for the availability of chrome supplies to the United Kingdom of the threatened withdrawal of South African supplies, and of the consequential implications for United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Butcher: The Government are keeping the situation under review and are consulting companies in the sectors of industry concerned about their stock position.

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the world production of chrome and the percentage derived from South Africa.

Mr. Butcher: In 1984 world production of chromium ore was approximately 8,841,700 tonnes, of which South Africa produced 34 per cent.

Robotics

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the introduction of robotics upon employment during the next decade.

Mr. Butcher: Although my Department has not commissioned any such work I know of studies undertaken by a number of other organisations.

In the short term there may be some job losses arising from the introduction of robots but in the longer term the productivity improvements they make possible, will enhance the earning power and competitiveness of British industry and provide a sound base for future employment prospects. Robots have to be manufactured and marketed —tasks all requiring manpower in the United Kingdom.

Productivity (East Midlands)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the change in productivity in the east midlands since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Tin

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent suspension of tin trading on the London metal exchange.

Mr. Brittan: Trading of tin metal was suspended on the London metal exchange last Thursday following the inability of the buffer stock manager of the International Tin Council to support the market. The decision to cease buffer stock operations was taken solely on the initiative of the executive chairman of the Tin Council in accordance with the powers vested in him under the Sixth International Tin Agreement, of which the United Kingdom is a consumer member.

The Government will be participating in a special session of the International Tin Council convened on Tuesday 29 October to consider the position following the suspension of buffer stock operations. Officials are discussing the matter with the London metal exchange.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest progress in privatising the interests of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yesterday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave his consent to British Shipbuilders for the sale of Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd to a management buy-out team led by the present Managing Director, Mr. Peter Usher.

British Shipbuilders will receive a basic consideration of some £18·5 million. In addition, BS will receive a further payment if certain contracts are won shortly but it has accepted a small contingent liability should redundancies arise.

Directors (Prosecutions)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in how many cases in each of the years since 1979 to the latest date available charges have been brought by his Department against directors for *(a)* criminal offences and *(b)* misfeasance and breach of duty.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985 c. *292*]: Details of prosecutions under the Companies Act are given in the annual reports laid before both Houses of Parliament under section 729 of the Companies Act 1985, which are available in the Library of the House. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State also undertakes a small number of prosecutions of Directors under a number of other Acts, but detailed statistics cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Pirate Radio

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial, manpower and other resources are currently allocated by his Department for the detection, surveillance and prevention of pirate radio broadcasting.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *309*]: The greater part of the resources of the Radio Investigation Service are now devoted to enforcement action against all forms of unlicensed use or abuse of radio, particularly when this endangers the emergency services or the livelihood of those whose businesses depend upon radio. How much is spent on unlicensed broadcasters depend on our success in getting home the message that vigorous action will be taken to deal with them. Few now transmit regularly or for long periods.

In 1984-85, £351,900 was spent on enforcement operations against unlicensed radio broadcasters; this figure includes apportionments of staff costs, vehicles, technical equipment and other resources as appropriate. The RIS has 223 staff at present.

Between 1 October 1984 and 30 September 1985, the RIS took action on 228 occasions against unlicensed radio broadcasters, and 106 persons were convicted over the same period for involvement with such broadcasts.

Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Industries

Dr. Norman A. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's shipbuiling and marine engineering industries.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *309*]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given yesterday at c. *311* by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley).

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Building Degree Courses

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* those institutions of higher education where building degree courses have been discontinued since 1981; and if he will list the courses affected.

Mr. Brooke: In the public sector of higher education no building degree courses have been discontinued since 1981. In the university sector a BSc. degree course in building and management at Brunel university was discontinued from the 1983-84 academic year and a BSc. degree course in building and quantity surveying at Aston university was discontinued from the 1984-85 academic year.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of students graduating in each of the last 10 years in: (i) universities and (ii) public sector higher education, in pure building degree courses.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested in (i) is subsumed within figures for the number of civil engineering graduates and could only be disaggregated at disproportionate cost. The information requested in (ii) is as follows:

	Number
1974	66
1975	63
1976	102
1977	64
1978	89
1979	136
1980	110
1981	163
1982	154
1983	153

British Geological Survey

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to reorganise the methods and channelling of funds to the British Geological Survey in support of its basic and strategic research programmes.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend does not intend to pre-empt the outcome of the study established by the Natural Environment Research Council and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils to assess the United Kingdom's needs for geological surveying over the next 5-10 years. The terms of reference of the study group were given in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply on 28 October to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) at column *311*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider appointing a new director of the British Geological Survey who is an eminent geologist.

Mr. Brooke: The appointment of the director of the British Geological Survey (BGS) is the responsibility of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), as the BGS is one of the NERC's institutes. I understand that the NERC has appointed Mr. G. I. Lumsden to be the BGS's director from 1 November 1985; and that Mr. Lumsden is an eminent geologist who has worked in the BGS for 36 years and has particular experience in stratigraphical, environmental and applied geology.

Conductive Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make a statement on the provision of conductive education for children with special needs;

(2) if his Department has any plans to fund *(a)* research into and *(b)* programmes of conductive education; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The system known as "conductive education" was developed in Hungary, in the context of the Hungarian educational system. I understand that a number of schools and units in England offer a form or derivative of conductive education. My Department is currently considering a proposal put forward by the Spastics Society for a small-scale study of current provision and an evaluation of the educational and other implications which would result from any wider development of the system in this country. There are no funds available to my right hon. Friend from which he could directly pay for independent programmes of conductive education.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations his Department has received from *(a)* parents of children with special needs and *(b)* voluntary organisations concerning the provision of conductive education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no general representations on the subject from parents of children with special needs. He is however currently considering two appeals submitted by parents under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 in which conductive education features as a relevant issue. The Spastics Society has submitted a request for financial assistance towards the cost of a proposed study into the system of conductive education and this application is now under consideration.

Doctors and Dentists

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether extra funds will be made available to ensure that doctors and dentists in teaching hospitals, but employed by universities, have the same pay rise as their National Health Service colleagues.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government are currently considering a request from the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals that recurrent grant paid to universities should be increased for this purpose. A response has been promised within the next month.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give a progress report on the new general certificate of secondary education examinations in respect of *(a)* teacher training, *(b)* national criteria, *(c)* preparation of employers to accept the new certificates, *(d)* syllabuses and *(e)* teacher briefings and manuals; and what have been the effects of the teachers' pay dispute on such progress.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our plans for the introduction of the GCSE are well on course. We have had no reports of significant disruption caused by teacher action in the context of the current pay dispute. The GCSE examining groups and the LEAs are well-advanced in their preparations for the national programme of in-service training. All teachers of the GCSE are to attend preparatory seminars starting in January next year. Common materials for seminars, teachers' guides and videos are being prepared by the Secondary Examinations Council. They will be distributed to schools as early as possible in January next year. The GCSE national criteria were published last March and have been distributed to all seondary schools and colleges. The Department has plans to continue to publicise the GCSE by various means, including the production of material designed for employers. All GCSE syllabuses must be approved and published by May 1986. The Secondary Examinations Council and the GCSE examining groups are taking steps to approve as many as possible well before that date. Draft GCSE syllabuses in many subjects have already been made available to schools and colleges.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the proposed time-table for implementing the new general certificate of secondary education examinations.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend announced the Government's decision to introduce the GCSE in June 1984. Since then the Department has received some 35 letters requesting that the examinations be postponed for a year or more. Members of the NUT also raised this question at a meeting with my right hon. Friend in September.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department concerning the number of schools yet to receive copies of the proposed general certificate of secondary education syllabuses; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Draft GCSE syllabuses in many subjects have already been distributed to schools. The GCSE examining groups will issue all syllabuses in final, approved form as soon as possible.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is satisfied with the progress made in the introduction of the proposed general certificate of secondary education examinations.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department in respect of the number of areas where subject representatives for the proposed general certificate of secondary education examination system have yet to be appointed.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is not available to the Department.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now drop the proposed merit and distinction certificates from the proposals for the new general certificate of secondary education examination system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales are now considering their proposals in the light of responses received to the consultation paper issued last December. Decisions will be announced as soon as possible.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many and what proportion of teachers who will be engaged in teaching candidates for the new general certificate of secondary education examinations he expects to have received their in-service training before September 1986.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is for LEAs, schools and colleges to ensure that all teachers of the GCSE attend briefing seminars, preferably before September 1986 but in any event before the end of the calendar year.

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh Dental Hospital and School

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an up-to-date statement on the future of the Edinburgh dental hospital and school.

Mr. John MacKay: In my answer of 26 July at column 692 to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) I referred to the outcome of the discussions on 23 July between Edinburgh university, Lothian health board, the University Grants Committee and the Scottish Home and Health Department. I understand that the health board will shortly submit proposals to replace the dental hospital for consideration by the University Grants Committee and the Secretary of State.

Telford College

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will make resources available for phase 3 to provide an extension to the building department of Telford college to go ahead shortly with £4·1 million allocated for the purpose concentrating more facilities on the site of the college;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to enable Lothian regional council to purchase the area of ground next to Telford college, presently owned by Edinburgh district council for expansion of the college facilities on the site.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Lothian regional council has not sought consent to incur capital expenditure on building an extension to Telford college. Any such request would

receive careful consideration in the light of available resources and of bids received from other authorities for further education building capital consents.

Leith Nautical College

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether extra resources will be made available to Lothian regional council for the buildings of Leith nautical college and for their running costs; and if he will make a statement as to the future use of the buildings.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Detailed discussions are in train between the Scottish Education Department and Lothian regional council about the proposed transfer of Leith nautical college to regional council management. No final decision has yet been taken in this matter.

Agriculture and Horticulture (Assistance)

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his response to requests for assistance to Scottish farmers following the bad summer in Scotland and its effects upon crops.

Mr. Younger: I refer the right hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 24 October at column 246.

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance he proposes to provide to the horticultural industry in Scotland, in view of the serious effects upon it of the last two summers.

Mr. Younger: The whole of the Scottish agriculture and horticulture industry is facing considerable difficulties as a result of the exceptionally poor summer. The steps that might be taken by Government to assist producers are still under review. It is likely, however, that assistance will be concentrated on the livestock sector where the need both in economic and in animal welfare terms is greatest.

Magnox Power Stations

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when it is intended to decommission the Magnox nuclear power stations in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I understand that the South of Scotland Electricity Board and British Nuclear Fuels plc have taken no decisions on the timing of decommissioning of their Magnox reactors at Hunterston and Chapelcross respectively but they make financial provision for eventual decommissioning in their accounts.

Farm Animal Welfare Council (Report)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed status of the recent Farm Animal Welfare Council report.

Mr. Younger: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply he received from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on 21 October 1985 at column 3.

Teaching Staff (Higher Education)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teaching staff were employed in public sector higher education in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The following table gives the available information on the numbers of staff employed in public sector further education. It is not possible in all cases to distinguish between staff engaged in teaching advanced and non-advanced courses.

	Academic session (Full-Time Equivalents)						
	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Central institutions*	1,283	1,326	1,353	1,352	1,354	1,363	1,376
Colleges of education*, †	1,053	1,021	981	913	878	839	780
LA colleges†,‡	4,941	5,101	5,367	5,545	6,471	6,672	(p)6,752
Total	7,277	7,448	7,701	7,810	8,703	8,874	8,908

(p)—provisional

* These establishments are funded by Central Government through the Scottish Education Department.

† Figures for the colleges of education and local authority colleges include a few academic non-teaching staff.

‡ Before 1982-83 the Local Authority figures exclude part-time staff.

Environmental Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now reconsider his earlier decision not to carry out an independent inquiry into environmental pollution and associated human and animal health problems within a radius of 20 miles from Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has received no substantive evidence which would justify changing his decision.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made with the South of Scotland Electricity Board for his officials to obtain air filter pads from the board's generating stations within 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire; and if he will commission scientific analyses of such air pads to test for the presence of trace amounts of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) and arrange for the reports of such analyses to be published.

Mr. Ancram: I have no reason to believe that fly ash from fossil fuelled power stations within 20 miles of Bonnybridge will make a significant contribution to background levels of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls but I have asked my Inspectorate to pursue this matter with the SSEB.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek information from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency about the modification proposed in Sweden to existing waste incinerators to ensure that toxic wastes are burnt in such a manner as to preclude the inadvertent production of dioxins and furans.

Mr. Ancram: Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate, as part of an on-going study, seeks information on waste incinerator operations at home and abroad; this will include the operation in Sweden.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to obtain information from present and former employees of Re-Chem International Ltd. of the precise circumstances surrounding the incineration at the company's Bonnybridge plant of substances capable of producing dioxins, furans and other persistent toxins during the period of 1974 to 1984 inclusive.

Mr. Ancram: No. It would not be appropriate to seek the information requested in the manner suggested.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied that the water authorities in Central Scotland have enough money to allow them access to laboratories equipped to test for the presence in drinking water of polychlorinated byphenyls, polychlorinated terphenyls, polybrominated byphenyls, and for dioxins and furans, in parts per trillion; what samples of water are taken regularly for laboratory analysis at this scale of measurement; and whether he will publish in full the results of such analyses.

Mr. Ancram: I am not aware of any of the water authorities in central Scotland having been deterred by financial considerations from making use of laboratories equipped to analyse samples of water for the substances to which the hon. Member refers. The information sought on sampling and the results of analyses are not held centrally.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any information about whether the equipment used by Re-Chem International Ltd. at its Bonnybridge incinerator plant between 1974 and 1984 was at all times operated strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and specifications.

Mr. Ancram: I do not have information in this form. During the period, however, the plant was required to operate within the best practicable means as set by Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate. On the occasions when breaches were known to have occurred, appropriate action was taken by the inspectorate.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any information about the level of contamination by toxic wastes present in soil and dust in the Denny and Bonnybridge areas.

Mr. Ancram: Samples of soil from several locations have been analysed for polychlorinated byphenyls and derivatives. The results are satisfactory except in one location where part of a field adjacent to a disused refuse tip is contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibemdzo dioxins and polychlorinated dibemdzo furins. Investigations into the significance and extent of the contamination are continuing.

I am aware that samples from this same field have been analysed, at the request of the farmer, for heavy metals. The results have been sent to him by the laboratories involved.

Rates

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend the Rating and Valuation (Scotland) Act 1956.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985, c. *285*]: Changes to the rating and valuation system are being considered in our current study of local government finance.

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review the rating of sporting land.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985, c. *285*]: I am aware of the strength of feeling over rates among the owners of sporting properties in Scotland. The long established difference in the treatment of sporting rights by the rating and valuation system north and south of the border is among the issues which will be looked at in the context of general proposals for reform emerging from our current examination of the whole system of local government finance in Britain.

DEFENCE

Silentnight Ltd.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the armed forces have purchased any beds from Silentnight Ltd. in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The armed forces have not purchased any beds from Silentnight Ltd. in the last five years.

Contracts

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence contracts have been awarded to *(a)* Securicor and *(b)* RCA in the last two years; and if he will list the establishments concerned.

Mr. Norman Lamont: During the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, which are the last two years for which statistics are available, the Ministry of Defence placed a total of seven contracts (including amendments) with Securicor Ltd. and a total of 58 contracts (including amendments) with RCA Ltd.

Because of the nature of some of those contracts it would be inappropriate to name any of the establishments concerned in them.

L-85 Rifle

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long it has taken to develop the L-85 rifle.

Mr. Norman Lamont: From the endorsement of the feasibility study, the development of the SA 80 individual weapon took 11½ years until January 1984, when its design was accepted by the Ministry of Defence on behalf of the three services. The full development phase lasted some five years.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if left-handed infantrymen will be issued with protective visors when using the new L-85 rifle;

(2) whether left-handed infantrymen will be able to use the L-85 Endeavour rifle;

(3) if a modified version of the L-85 rifle will be introduced specially for left-handed soldiers;

(4) if he is satisfied with the operation of the L-85 rifle for left-handed riflemen.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The operational requirement for an infantryman's rifle in modern warfare is for a short, compact weapon. It is this requirement which dictates the design of the SA-80 which, in its standard form, requires to be fired from the right shoulder. Trials carried out during the development stage of the weapon to determine whether a left-handed soldier could fire the weapon effectively showed this to be the case. Further trials will be carried out to confirm this assessment as the rifle is introduced. There is no requirement for the use of protective visors.

A conversion kit has been designed to permit the rifle to be fired from the left shoulder, but it is not expected that it will be necessary to proceed with this modification.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, following the introduction of the L-85 rifle, left-handed recruits will no longer be recruited for the Army.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Left-handed Service Personnel

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has information as to the number and proportion of service men who are left handed.

Mr. Lamont: Records on this information could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. However, it is reasonable to expect the proportion of left-handed service men to be in the region of 10 per cent. in line with the population at large.

Nimrod Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will estimate when all 11 airborne early warning Nimrods will reach an initial operating capability;

(2) if he will estimate when the 11 airborne early warning Nimrods will meet the full air staff requirement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We are currently discussing with GEC Avionics an incentive contract for the further development of the Nimrod AEW mission system avionics to an acceptable initial operational standard. An operational AEW capability for the Nimrod could be achieved in 1987.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of the airborne early warning Nimrod programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: To date, some £831 million (at current prices) has been spent and committed on the Nimrod AEW project.

Shackleton Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Shackleton airborne early warning aircraft use coded digital data transmissions when exchanging the tracks of intercepted aircraft with ground radar stations.

Mr. Stanley: It is not our practice to give details of the encryption facilities available on operational aircraft.

Chile

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Chilean personnel are being accepted on training courses in the United Kingdom in 1985-86.

Mr. Stanley: Yes.

Naval Bases (Food Surpluses)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the amount of food surplus in tons accumulated in the last year at Royal Navy bases in Portsmouth, specifying separate statistics for meat and bread, respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No significant food surpluses have been accumulated at naval establishments in the Portsmouth area. Food returned by Naval ships de-storing at Portsmouth is re-issued from the Royal Clarence yard, unless condemned for destruction by professional food inspectors. In 1985 to date some 2·6 tons of meat and 2·3 tons of other fresh and frozen food, including bread, have been destroyed. No separate statistics are available for bread. This tonnage represents less than 0·2 per cent. of food handled at the Royal Clarence yard.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 30 October 1985

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tanzania (Road)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign ad Commonwealth Affairs how much of the Songea-Makambako road, Tanzania after upgrading was completed, has subsequently had to be redone or repaired; and what has been the cost of this.

Mr. Raison: Minor repairs after landslips — which had been expected with the relatively low cost per kilometre of the project—have been paid for as part of the project, and of its subsequent maintenance, for which £190,000 has so far been allocated.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has had with the Tanzanian Government concerning the progress of the upgrading of the Songea-Makambako road.

Mr. Raison: There has been continuous contact throughout work on the project, including planning board meetings held roughly every quarter.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the supplementary contract for the second phase of the Songea-Makambako road was negotiated.

Mr. Raison: The contract was awarded on 23 December 1982.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will itemise the reasons for the increase in the cost of the Songea-Makambako road from the original estimated cost in 1978 to the amount spent to date.

Mr. Raison: We could not forecast the exact final cost at the outset for lack of full detailed designs. To achieve an early start a special target cost contract was concluded rather than a conventional admeasurement contract. Additional factors were the 1981 decision to extend the sealed surface of the road to its full length of 184 miles instead of the 97 miles first envisaged, higher than expected inflation and technical delays in the early part of the project. It is not possible to attribute the cash increase to each item individually as they are closely interrelated.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is now the estimated cost for the completion of the upgrading of the Songea-Makambako road, Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: £98·6 million, of which the British Government have agreed to provide £89·6 million.

Chile (Political Refugees)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received from the United Kingdom branch of World University Service concerning return of political refugees to Chile; what response he has made; and for what reasons.

Mr. Raison [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 October 1985, c. *155*]: Following is the text of my letter to the hon. Member:

"The World University Service (UK) approached me in 1984, and again in 1985, for financial support to its programme for the voluntary repatriation of Chilean refugees. In 1984 HMG made £75,000 available but we have been unable to offer similar support this year. Aid funds are not unlimited and decisions have to be made between competing claims for assistance. In reaching our decision this year we took account of the substantial support of almost £11 million which we have given in the past to the WUS Chilean Programme principally for training in Britain."

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Butcher: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Eureka Programme

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how it is proposed to fund the Eureka programme relating to advanced European technology; and what will be the extent of Government support.

Mr. Butcher: The financing of Eureka projects is likely to vary according to their nature and their participants; those projects involving United Kingdom companies may qualify for finance from existing schemes of support for which they are eligible. However, the Government consider that, since Eureka projects are aimed at developing internationally competitive high technology products, they should in the main be able to rely on financing from commercial sources. We have no plans to set up a specific fund for Eureka projects.

Platinum

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the current production of platinum (i) in South Africa and (ii) in countries with centrally planned economies; and what percentage their combined production represents of total world production.

Mr. Butcher: In 1984 South Africa produced 90,200 kg of platinum group metals contained; and of the countries with centrally planned economies the USSR and Yugoslavia produced 115,000 kg platinum group metals contained in total. These combined productions represent 94 per cent. of world production.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what official visits are currently planned by representatives of participants in the Alvey programme, or members of the Alvey directorate, to *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Japan with a view to the discussion of collaborative projects;

(2) what official visits are currently planned by representatives of participants in the Alvey programme, or

members of the Alvey directorate, to *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Japan, with a view to the discussion or the sale of research information obtained through Alvey programme work.

Mr. Butcher: No such visits are planned by members of the Alvey directorate and I am not aware of any such visits planned by participants in the Alvey programme. Any exploitation of the results of work funded under the programme outside the European Community would, however, be subject to the agreement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the projects funded by the Alvey programme to date, indicating in each case the company, university, or research body involved and any intended eventual use of the project.

Mr. Butcher: I am arranging to have details of the projects comprising the Alvey programme placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate what funds he has made available in each of the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 to work undertaken under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Butcher: One hundred and ten million pounds has been allocated to the Alvey programme by the Department of Trade and Industry. Actual expenditure against the DTI Vote in 1984-85 was £6·5 million and is expected to be £18 million in 1985-86.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what approaches he has received from the United States Government, or from United States based companies, expressing an interest in the purchase of information technology arising out of civil aspects of the work of the Alvey programme; and what has been his response.

Mr. Butcher: I have received no such approaches.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many official visits to participants in the Alvey programme are currently planned by visitors from the Japanese information technology industry, the United States information technology industry and the United States defence industry, and as to the names and status of the visitors concerned.

Mr. Butcher: I am not aware of any such plans for future visits. As a response to an Alvey-led British visit to ICOT, the Japanese fifth generation computer project, a delegation representing the management committee of ICOT was in the United Kingdom between 21 and 25 October and visited the Alvey directorate and a number of Alvey participants. The delegation comprised:

Mr. Kotaka	Vice President, Engineering NEC Corporation.
Mr. Enomoto	Senior Manager, Coordination Staff, Technical Planning and Coordinations Division, Toshiba Corporation.
Mr. Imai	Chief Engineer, Technical Administration Department, Hitachi Ltd.
Mr. Sakai	Manager, Administration Department, Technology Administration Divisions, Fujitsu Ltd.
Mr. Suzuki	Associate Director, Engineering Tokyo Branch, Matsushita Electric Industrial Company, Ltd.
Mr. Yamamoto	Senior Staff, R&D Headquarter, Mitsubishi Electric Group.
Mr. H. Hiroshige	Senior Executive Director, ICOT.
Mr. Ishikawa	Manager, Administration Department, ICOT.
Mr. Kurozumi	Assistant Director, Research Centre, ICOT.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 17 December 1984, *Official Report* column *21*, indicating that the majority of the 50 or so firms now participating in the Alvey programme have interests in both civil and defence applications of information technology, he will indicate precisely how many firms fall into this category.

Mr. Butcher: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what major advances in the development of advanced information technology have been achieved to date by work carried out under the Alvey programme in each of the following areas *(a)* software engineering, *(b)* person/machine interface, *(c)* intelligent knowledge based systems, *(d)* very large scale integrated circuits and *(e)* communications; to what practical use these advances have so far been put; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Alvey is a five-year programme with long-term objectives. Most of the work under the programme is defined and under way but it is early yet to predict quantified results. Some work, such as that in software engineering, may be expected to lead to exploitation within the next year or so; some, such as that in advanced computer architectures, is unlikely to lead to new products before the end of this decade. Progress on projects under way is, however, outlined in the details referred to in my earlier reply to the hon. Member which are being placed in the Library of the House.

Advanced Information Technology

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for continued support for the development of advanced information technology in Britain beyond the cessation of the Alvey programme in 1988.

Mr. Butcher: The community of those involved in relevant research and development is currently formulating its views on the need for further activity of this sort. Such views will need to be taken into account before any decisions are taken and they will need to be assessed in the light of current proposals for advanced technological collaboration at the European level.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the percentage of research and development work being undertaken in Britain at present in advanced information technology represented by work funded under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Butcher: Data are not available in this detail. Independent evaluations of the Alvey programme have been commissioned which should go some way to answering this question. These will be published.

Electricity (Resale)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading in his report on the resale of electricity by landlords that there should be a new criminal offence of reselling electricity for domestic use at a price higher than the maximum price fixed by the appropriate electricity board.

Mr. Howard: The Government will shortly be making an announcement in response to the report by the Director General of Fair Trading.

Technological Innovation

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest Government proposals to help stimulate technological innovation in British industry.

Mr. Channon: The best way the Government can help to stimulate technological innovation in British industry is by continuing to work towards providing a business climate favourable to enterprise and initiative.

In addition, my Department offers a range of measures to assist industrial research and development and innovation. On 25 March my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State explained that following a review of policy the Department would be making more money available for collaborative research, advisory services and schemes for encouraging best practice, and that support for projects in individual firms would be concentrated on innovative projects which represent a significant advance. Within these arrangements we continue to emphasise certain key technologies and their application such as microelectronics, fibre optics and computer software.

For 1985-86 the Department's provision for scientific and technological assistance and support for investment in innovation totals £420 million.

An account of the Department's recent activities in support of technological innovation is given in the report entitled "Science and Technology Report 1984-85" published on 28 October, a copy of which I am placing in the Library of the House.

Tin

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to give financial assistance to the International Tin Council in its current efforts to establish a new international tin agreement.

Mr. Channon: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend made yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

Steering Location Inquiries (North-West Region)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many steering location inquiries have been received in the north-west region of his Department; and of these how many have been referred to the Cumbria county council industrial development unit during the last month for which statistics are avialable.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In September 1985 the north west regional office received 24 steering location inquiries: one of these was referred to Cumbria county council's industrial development unit (IDU). Close liaison between the regional office and the IDU continues.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total number and value of offers of regional assistance made to companies in the West Cumbria travel-to-work areas, in Cumbria as a whole, in the north west region and in the northern region for the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In September 1985, 11 offers of assistance totalling £454,000 were made under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 towards projects in the north west region. There were no offers made to projects in Cumbria during this month. 17 offers totalling £4·97 million were made towards projects in the north east region.

Under the new regional development grant scheme 51 offers of assistance totalling £1·26 million were made to companies in the north west. Of these there were three offers totalling £26,455 made to projects in West Cumbria. 96 offers totalling £1·76 million were made towards projects in the north east.

Shipbuilding Redundancy Payments (Appeals)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the British Shipbuilders' national appeal procedure, as laid out in paragraph 12 of the shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme internal appeals procedure, has been implement.

Mr. Butcher: Not yet. However, British Shipbuilders will be discussing the shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme internal appeals procedure with the unions later this week with a view to hearing outstanding national appeals as soon as possible. They expect them all to be heard in November.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many appeals under the British Shipbuilders' national appeal procedure relating to the shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme internal appeals procedure have been carried out in each year since 1980; and how many appeals are at present outstanding.

Mr. Butcher: No appeals at national level have been heard under the shipbuilding redundancy payment scheme internal appeals procedure. There are 15 appeals outstanding at this level.

QE2 (Re-engining)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if consultations have taken place between his Department and Cunard Shipping Ltd. concerning the re-engining of the QE2; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Discussions about the re-engining of the Queen Elizabeth 2 have taken place between Trafalgar House plc, the parent company of Cunard, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. On Friday 25 October Trafalgar House announced that the investment would go ahead but that, as no United Kingdom yard had been able to offer to carry out the work, the contract had been placed abroad. Nevertheless Trafalgar House announced that some £25 million or 30 per cent. of the total cost will be spent in the United Kingdom. GEC will supply the electric motors and generating plant, while Harland and Wolff will supply certain engine components.

British Shipbuilders (Subsidies)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each year since 1979-80 the total subsidy paid to British Shipbuilders; and if he will calculate what these data are as *(a)* a percentage of sales value of work done and *(b)* per employee.

Mr. Channon: Following are the figures:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Government subsidy for British Shipbuilders* (£ million)	†267	150	153	114	‡220	‡154
Percentage of sales value of work done	32·8	16·7	14·9	10·4	24·8	17·3
Subsidy per employee (£)	3,338	2,143	2,297	1,770	3,780	3,359

* Intervention fund assistance and payments of public dividend capital to British Shipbuilders.
† Includes public dividend capital provided to permit a repayment of a £55 million loan from the National Loans Fund.
‡ Excludes the cost of the sale of Scott Lithgow Ltd. to Trafalgar House Ltd. in March 1984.

CLOFT Scheme

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in seeking alternatives to the CLOFT scheme rejected by the EEC, so that assistance can be given to the footwear and leather industries.

Mr. Channon: The proposed CLOFT scheme envisaged assistance to eligible small firms in the footwear, clothing, knitting and textile industries, but not to the leather industry. As regards footwear, we are considering a proposal from the industry, as my hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for corporate and consumer affairs informed the House on 23 October. We do not regard this as an alternative to CLOFT, which was a sectoral aid scheme.

Japan (Leather Imports)

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to try to obtain the abolition of Japanese quotas and other impediments to imports of leather and leather products.

Mr. Channon: The Japanese Government have made some proposals which are under examination within the GATT. The initial EC view is that they do not represent sufficient progress towards the degree of liberalisation required. The Commission will, within the GATT negotiations, press for more effective measures of real benefit to Community producers.

Leather (Labelling)

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation providing for mandatory labelling requirements for leather products.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans at present to do so.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the gross domestic product of each region in England for the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how each region compares with the figures for 1980 and 1975 in real and cash terms.

Mr. Butcher: Current price (cash terms) gross domestic product data for the regions of England are published in the article "Regional Accounts 1983" ("Economic Trends" November 1984), a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. This article covers 1983 (the latest available), 1980 and 1975. Constant price (real terms) gross domestic product data for the regions are not available.

EC (Spanish Subsidies)

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what arrangements have been made during the negotiations for the entry of Spain into the EEC to remove Spanish subsidies on finished leather;

(2) what arrangements have been made during the negotiations for the entry of Spain into the EEC to remove the Spanish subsidy on exports of scoured wool.

Mr. Channon: From 1 January 1986, Spanish Government subsidies will have to comply with the state aids provisions of the Treaty of Rome. The export subsidy provided through the operation of the present tax system will automatically disappear when VAT is introduced in Spain on the same date.

EC (Raw Hides and Skins)

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements have been made during the negotiations for the entry of Spain into the EEC to ensure that there will be free availability of raw hides and skins within the Community.

Mr. Channon: Under article 42 of the Treaty of Accession, quantitative restrictions on trade between the Community and Spain are to be abolished on 1 January 1986, except where a derogation is specifically provided for. There is no such derogation in relation to raw hides and skins.

EC (Footwear and Leather)

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions there have been in the negotiations for the entry of Spain and Portugal into the EEC regarding the footwear and leather industries.

Mr. Channon: During the accession negotiations there were extensive discussions on the arrangements governing trade with Spain and Portugal in industrial products from 1 January 1986. A substantial part of these were concerned with the arrangements for footwear and leather products. The British footwear and leather industry was consulted throughout.

EC (Product Liability)

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress towards the implementation in the United Kingdom of the European Commission directive on product liability.

Mr. Howard: My Department will be issuing a consultative document before the end of this year on implementation of the EC directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the member states concerning liability for defective products. Following this consultation, legislation will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

English Estates

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *160*, if he has had any discussions with the pensions fund industry or local authority superannuation fund managers about the possibility of their providing capital to meet the demand for English Estates to build factories to the specific order of prospective tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No, Sir. But as my hon. Friend will appreciate, English Estates is required under statutory guidelines to secure the maximum possible level of private sector funding in all its development projects and seeks to do so.

East Midlands (Productivity)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the change in productivity in the east midlands since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1981.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 October 1985]: There are no data available for the change in productivity in the east midlands since 1979 and 1981. However, output per person employed in the whole economy has risen by 13·1 per cent. since the first quarter of 1979 and by 13·4 per cent. since the first quarter of 1981, compared to the first quarter of 1985.

British Telecom

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list of the firms with which British Telecom shares were placed at the beginning of the offer period; and if he will specify how many shares each firm underwrote.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 October 1985, c. *292*]: All allocations made at the time of the British Telecom offer for sale, including placing allocations made to firms acting as priority applicants, were recorded in the company's share register. This is available for public inspection.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Maintenance Awards

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the total amounts paid out in each of the last five years for which figures are available on *(a)* mandatory maintenance awards and *(b)* discretionary maintenance awards in real terms using 1979-80 as a base, by local education authorities.

Mr. Brooke: A full reply could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The following table shows the amounts paid out in respect of full-value mandatory and discretionary awards by each local authority in England and Wales in 1979-80 and 1983-84, and the value in percentage terms of the 1983-84 payments deflated by increases in retail prices, using 1979-80 as the base.

	Expenditure on full-value Mandatory Awards £000		*Percentage value in real terms (1979=100)*	*Expenditure on full-value Discretionary Awards £000*		*Percentage value in real terms (1979=100)*
	1979-80	*1983-84*		*1979-80*	*1983-84*	
Barking	402	539	92	38	45	81
Barnet	3,254	4,195	89	380	502	91
Bexley	1,339	1,680	86	215	235	75
Brent	2,215	3,265	101	711	1,679	162
Bromley	2,600	3,316	88	227	230	70
Croydon	2,673	3,463	89	218	228	72
Ealing	2,215	3,327	103	349	69	13
Enfield	2,188	2,512	79	56	66	82
Haringey	2,255	3,007	92	394	264	46
Harrow	1,910	2,701	97	219	194	61
Havering	1,377	1,712	85	154	94	42
Hillingdon	1,597	2,062	89	310	203	45
Hounslow	1,255	2,147	117	170	147	59
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,194	1,609	93	136	61	31
Merton	1,239	1,694	94	93	45	34
Newham	974	1,524	107	109	143	90
Redbridge	1,757	2,409	94	246	240	67
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,536	2,370	106	226	175	53
Sutton	1,130	1,719	105	169	129	52
Waltham Forest	1,171	1,712	100	247	230	64
Inner London	16,405	24,926	104	6,017	9,415	107
Birmingham	6,630	8,939	93	325	469	99
Coventry	2,391	3,653	105	281	238	58
Dudley	1,546	2,418	107	114	214	129

	Expenditure on full-value Mandatory Awards £000		Percentage value in real terms (1979=100)	Expenditure on full-value Discretionary Awards £000		Percentage value in real terms (1979=100)
	1979-80	1983-84		1979-80	1983-84	
Sandwell	1,030	1,751	117	162	222	94
Solihull	1,828	2,376	89	81	95	81
Walsall	1,350	2,186	111	930	234	172
Wolverhampton	1,644	2,530	106	136	Nil	Nil
Knowsley	1,007	1,274	87	19	23	82
Liverpool	4,306	5,049	81	Nil	Nil	Nil
St. Helens	1,287	1,820	97	112	129	79
Sefton	3,217	4,695	100	181	203	77
Wirral	3,112	4,803	106	409	874	147
Bolton	1,728	2,973	118	204	199	67
Bury	1,395	2,140	105	223	177	55
Manchester	3,380	4,258	87	471	394	57
Oldham	1,190	1,843	106	76	100	90
Rochdale	1,230	1,875	105	134	193	98
Salford	1,175	1,639	96	219	209	66
Stockport	2,814	4,025	98	262	298	78
Tameside	1,101	1,604	100	84	150	122
Trafford	2,138	3,435	110	133	Nil	Nil
Wigan	1,615	2,724	116	119	259	149
Barnsley	947	1,398	101	207	202	67
Doncaster	1,585	2,508	109	166	273	113
Rotherham	1,140	2,022	122	81	159	134
Sheffield	3,032	4,863	110	537	757	97
Bradford	2,998	4,883	112	562	978	120
Calderdale	1,079	1,859	118	151	198	90
Kirklees	2,489	3,689	102	358	508	98
Leeds	4,764	7,117	103	490	272	38
Wakefield	1,526	1,967	89	223	316	97
Gateshead	1,031	1,454	97	208	151	50
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,152	2,773	89	308	347	77
North Tyneside	1,441	1,795	86	217	174	55
South Tyneside	960	1,400	100	83	8	6
Sunderland	1,533	2,323	104	375	571	104
Isles of Scilly	14	28	136	11	2	10
Avon	6,855	10,810	108	745	1466	135
Bedfordshire	2,929	4,983	117	358	511	98
Berkshire	4,951	8,983	125	434	884	140
Buckinghamshire	4,401	7,175	112	406	500	85
Cambridgeshire	3,577	5,868	113	542	616	78
Cheshire	7,060	11,437	111	977	1,684	118
Cleveland	3,514	5,585	109	563	763	93
Cornwall	2,366	3,909	113	292	362	85
Cumbria	2,949	4,165	97	548	893	112
Derbyshire	5,106	7,456	100	422	386	63
Devon	6,187	9,621	107	1,596	1,939	83
Dorset	4,271	6,230	100	856	1,070	86
Durham	3,284	4,786	100	519	712	94
East Sussex	4,315	7,023	112	923	531	39
Essex	8,045	11,765	100	1,492	1,261	58
Gloucestershire	3,813	6,079	109	732	1,048	98
Hampshire	9,474	14,277	104	2,132	2,667	86
Hereford and Worcester	4,225	6,928	113	469	669	98
Hertfordshire	8,256	10,600	89	921	162	12
Humberside	4,612	7,155	107	903	1,713	130
Isle of Wight	583	1,137	134	113	178	108
Kent	9,670	14,887	106	2,173	2,837	90
Lancashire	10,473	14,852	97	1,150	1,888	113
Leicestershire	5,868	9,181	107	486	1,472	208
Lincolnshire	3,304	5,096	106	439	966	151
Norfolk	3,565	5,586	108	753	499	45
North Yorkshire	4,974	7,484	103	835	1,739	143
Northamptonshire	2,830	4,770	116	344	599	120
Northumberland	1,899	2,932	106	230	248	74
Nottinghamshire	5,732	8,857	106	609	809	91
Oxfordshire	4,141	6,557	109	487	397	56
Salop	2,324	3,752	111	410	674	113
Somerset	2,680	4,354	112	346	292	58
Staffordshire	5,656	9,001	109	748	797	73

	Expenditure on full-value Mandatory Awards £000		Percentage value in real terms (1979=100)	Expenditure on full-value Discretionary Awards £000		Percentage value in real terms (1979=100)
	1979-80	1983-84		1979-80	1983-84	
Suffolk	3,083	4,922	110	873	1,146	90
Surrey	9,003	13,025	99	912	791	60
Warwickshire	3,671	5,604	105	598	651	75
West Sussex	4,573	6,972	105	634	528	57
Wiltshire	3,379	5,189	105	613	576	65
Clwyd	2,698	4,213	107	265	526	136
Dyfed	2,719	4,392	111	15	5	24
Gwent	3,164	5,188	113	303	473	107
Gwynedd	1,623	2,802	119	41	34	57
Mid-Glamorgan	3,242	4,699	100	446	5	1
Powys	772	1,203	107	337	374	76
South Glamorgan	3,602	5,635	107	483	716	102
West Glamorgan	2,648	4,892	127	480	624	89
Total England and Wales	332,209	502,077	104	49,452	63,665	88

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

CERN

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether Her Majesty's Government have reached a decision following Sir John Kendrew's report relating to the United Kingdom subscription to CERN and related facilities.

Mr. Brooke: The Government are considering the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Science and Engineering Research Council on this matter.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate what funds the Science and Engineering Research Council has made available in each of the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 to work undertaken under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Brooke: The figures for funds actually spent by SERC on work undertaken under the Alvey programme in 1984-85 and provided in the budget for 1985-86 (at 1985-86 outturn prices) are as follows:—

1984-85 £ million	1985-86 £ million
6	11·4

Teachers (Expenses)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which local authorities offer inducements to teachers to attend courses during holidays by paying expenses.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is common practice for local authorities to provide some reimbursement to teachers of costs incurred as a result of attendance at in-service training courses, as resources allow. The Department does not collect information on the extent of this practice.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make proposals for reductions in teachers' remuneration where disruption is caused by industrial action.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is for the employers to implement the contracts of employment which they have with their teachers. I understand that these contain provisions for the deduction of salary in certain circumstances including strike action. I also understand that a small number of authorities have made deductions in respect of disruptive action short of strikes, such as refusal to cover for absent teachers. I further understand that the National Union of Teachers contends that employers do not have the right to make such deductions, and court action is pending involving five local education authorities.

Burnham Committee

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account he took of the non-recognition by certain local education authorities of the Professional Association of Teachers when revising the union side representatives of the Burnham committee; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: In reviewing the composition of the teachers' panel of the Burnham P&S committee, I have followed my predecessors as Secretary of State and used as my criteria the numbers in membership of the different unions and the distinctive nature of their membership. The committeee is responsible for reviewing the pay of school teachers throughout England and Wales and these criteria reflect that national function.

Research Scientists

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what study his Department has made of the consequences of the level of funding for equipment in research laboratories on the movement of scientists from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: The responses to the ABRC's brain drain inquiry suggest that dissatisfaction with the level of funding for research equipment is one of a number of reasons for British scientists taking researchh appointments overseas. The responses show that the provision in last year's PES settlement of additional funds to the UGC for re-equipping some of the best university research groups has been a factor in persuading some senior researchers to stay in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give what statistics he has available about the quitting from the United Kingdom of people of the highest scientific calibre to research institutes and laboratories in North America, Europe and Australia in the spheres of electronics, biochemistry and biophysics.

Mr. Brooke: National statistics are not available. However the ABRC's report to my right hon. Friend on their brain drain inquiry gives some figures for losses overseas from the university and research council groups covered by their survey. Copies of the ABRC's report will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the Advisory Body on Research Councils' report to his Department on the brain drain of human resources particularly in the areas of high technology and areas of scientific excellence.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. Copies of the report will be placed in the Library.

Haringey (Educational Provision and Response)

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the report by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools on educational provision and response in some Haringey schools has been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The report has not been withdrawn, either in whole or in part.

When the report was published in July 1984, discussions took place between the inspectorate and Haringey local education authority about the interpretation of examination results in the authority in relation to national figures. On the basis of figures then provided by the authority in substitution for other figures it had provided earlier, some of the comparisons drawn in the report would have been slightly different, as the senior chief inspector acknowledged in a letter to the authority's chief education officer. However, these figures would still have shown examination results in Haringey falling below national averages, and gave no cause for the inspectorate to alter the judgment in the report that results achieved by fifth-formers in the borough—particularly in the schools inspected—were disappointing, even after allowing for socio-economic factors in pupils' background.

The concern expressed by Her Majesty's inspectors about educational provision in Haringey secondary schools related to many other issues in addition to examination results. Concern was also expressed about the quality of education in primary schools, where examination results are not at issue.

The authority accepted the report as a basis for action, and is seeking to develop ways of responding constructively to the inspectorate's findings. It has submitted a progress report to me, and will be submitting a further progress report at the end of the year.

Natural Environment Research Council

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Natural Environment Research Council intends to appoint a director of earth sciences.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that it is the intention of the Natural Environment Research Council to appoint a director of earth sciences as soon as possible and that action is now in hand.

British Geological Survey

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the organisational structures of the British Geological Survey will be in future in the context of its recently agreed terms of reference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The organisational changes of the British Geological Survey are still under discussion in the context of the published NERC corporate plan. I understand that a final structure will be agreed after further consultation, particularly involving the director of earth sciences when appointed.

ENERGY

NIREX

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to reconstitute NIREX as a public company; and whom he proposes for the composition of the board of directors and the chairman of the company.

Mr. Goodlad: I hope to make a statement shortly.

Opencast Coalmining

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many opencast coalmining operations *(a)* are currently working and listed, *(b)* have been authorised in the past decade with specific method of use and *(c)* are subject to a planning application; and if, in the latter case, he will give an indication of the average time taken to obtain approval.

Mr. David Hunt: Forty-four NCB opencast sites are currently coaling in England and Wales and 10 in Scotland. The respective figures for licensed opencast sites is 57 and 25.

In the 10 years to September 1985, 112 authorisations have been granted in England and Wales and 25 in Scotland. Of the 112, 7 were specifically for coking coal and 11 for anthracite; of the 25, 2 were for low volatile coals.

Since the requirement for planning permission was placed on the NCB on 1 March 1984, 5 NCB sites in England and Wales have received planning permission and authorisation under the Opencast Coal Act 1958. Four of these are now working. A further 23 have yet to be resolved because planning permission has been refused or authorisation not yet granted or the planning application has not yet been determined. It would not be meaningful,

in the circumstances, to quote an "average time", but there can be as long as 15 months between application and determination.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

CEGB (Publicity Material)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the Central Electricity Generating Board a general directive that it should submit all publicity material to him for his prior approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The CEGB will remain free to issue any relevant publicity material consistent with its statutory powers and duties.

British Gas

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he proposes to take to seek to secure efficiency and competitive advantages from the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The proposals for the privatisation of British Gas will be of benefit to the consumer in the encouragement of efficiency by every means.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the distribution of his Department's save energy booklets by Marketforce in Newcastle under Lyme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: None.

Crude Oil

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the trend in crude oil prices over the 12-month period to the latest date for which figures are available; and what projections are available to him about trends over the ensuring three-month period.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Figures published by the International Energy Agency show that the average price of a barrel of crude oil imported into the IEA area fell about $1·60 between the second quarter of 1984 and the second quarter of 1985.

Short-term indicators show some strengthening of crude oil prices in the third quarter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Security (Fraudulent Claims)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, with a view to the discouragement of fraudulent claims for social security payments, he will consider the desirability of the Housing Executive requiring receipts for payments for work done as a condition of the payment of improvement and repair grants on private houses.

Mr. Needham: The prime requirement for the payment of a house renovation grant is the completion to a satisfactory standard of all the work specified by the Housing Executive. The submission of receipted builders' accounts is not a prior condition for payment of grant.

I am reluctant to introduce a procedure which might hold back claims from the less well-off for grants to combat housing unfitness and disrepair; particularly as it is doubtful if it would be an effective discouragement to fraudulent social security claims.

European Regional Development Fund

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of recent tourist project to benefit from the European Regional Development Fund.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows (Commitments made since 1980):

ERDF Grant Committed

Project	£
Altmore picnic site, Dungannon	1,117
Amelia Earhart tourist centre, Londonderry	36,000
Annalong marine park	195,000
Ardown arts and tourist centre	850,000
Benone tourism and recreation scheme	102,305
Carnfunnock tourism scheme	174,000
Carnlough harbour	52,000
Castlecoole golf course	159,000
Clogher valley picnic sites	26,750
Cranagh tourism development scheme	17,500
Cranfield tourist development scheme	113,500
Dungannon DC mobile promotional unit	8,475
Fermanagh DC mobile promotional unit	8,500
Flagstaff tourist information centre	43,750
Forkhill tourist amenity block	11,065
Foyle valley railway, Londonderry	161,500
Garrison hostel	95,000
Giants Causeway visitors centre	210,000
Gortin glen transit caravan park	139,175
Gortin glen scenic route	72,500
Gortin history park	450,000
Keggal road, Carnlough tourist amenity block	26,750
Kilbroney park, Rostrevor	287,500
Killmaddy Evans tourist amenity and information scheme (Dungannon)	150,000
Knockninny beach tourism development	29,600
Knockninny hostel	45,000
Londonderry interpretive centre	225,000
Londonderry tourist information centre	19,500
Marble Arch show caves	328,000
Newcastle leisure pool	242,500
Newcastle promenade	67,500
Newcastle tourist centre	213,800
Newtownstewart caravan park	41,000
Newtownstewart tourist information centre	32,500
Omagh tourist information centre	90,325
Plumbridge tourist amenity block	18,000
Portaferry amenity park	45,000
Portaferry visitors centre	107,400
Portrush water world	466,200
Sion Mills tourist information centre	24,250
Smith's strand tourist scheme	20,000
Sperrins visitor centre	93,700
St Patrick's heritage centre	39,000
Ulster American folk park	125,000

Project	£
Ulysses Grant heritage centre, Dungannon	109,805
Washing Bay tourist development scheme	11,585
Waterfoot tourist development scheme	55,500

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, in Northern Ireland in respect of *(a)* scheduled and *(b)* non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: Information is not kept in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average time spent on remand for those who were subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, in Northern Ireland in respect of *(a)* scheduled and *(b)* non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: Information is not kept in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons who were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded against with, spent *(a)* nil to three months on remand, *(b)* three to six months on remand, *(c)* six to nine months on remand, *(d)* nine to 12 months on remand and *(e)* over 12 months on remand in respect of those first remanded during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, in respect of (i) scheduled offences and (ii) non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: Information is not kept in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the weekly cost of keeping a prisoner in custody in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively, in a remand institution in Northern Ireland in respect of *(a)* scheduled and *(b)* non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: Northern Ireland has no separate remand institutions; nor is information about costs maintained separately in respect of scheduled and other offences.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to introduce financial compensation for those prisoners who were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with in Northern Ireland in respect of *(a)* scheduled and *(b)* non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: No.

Industrial Development Board

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many industrial national inquiries have been directed to *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board during the last month for which statistics are available.

Dr. Boyson: Since September 1982 the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board has been responsible for processing all inquiries about possible investment in Northern Ireland. The IDB received 13 firm inquiries from companies outside Northern Ireland in September 1985.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will express the totals of payments to Harland and Wolff for each year since 1979-80 in *(a)* a percentage of the sales value of work done and *(b)* per employee.

Dr. Boyson: Following is the information:

	Payments to H & W £ million	*Selling value of work done (SVWD)* £ million	*Payments as percentage of SVWD*	*Employees*	*Payment per employee*
1979-80	22·5	67·3	33·4	7,542	2,983
1980-81	41·2	57·3	71·9	7,370	5,590
1981-82	40·1	97·5	41·1	7,034	5,701
1982-83	46·2	72·5	63·7	6,263	7,377
1983-84	40·0	85·9	46·6	5,490	7,286
1984-85	37·5	59·1	63·5	5,163	7,263

Notes:

1. The payments are made under the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries (Northern Ireland) Order 1979.
2. Until 1980 the company's annual accounts were on a calendar year basis; those for 1981-82 were adjusted and covered a 15-month period; thereafter on a financial year basis. The selling value of work done and employee figures follow this pattern. Both are based on the company's annual accounts.

Store Lambs (Imports)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many store lambs were imported from the Republic of Ireland during the months of August, September and October.

Dr. Boyson: The available information is as follows:

Sheep and Lambs

	Numbers
August	8,390
September	7,851
October*	4,974

* Three weeks to 19 October 1985.

Separate figures are not held to differentiate sheep and lambs.

Fat Lambs (Exports)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fat lambs were exported to the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland during the months of June, July, August, September and October, respectively.

Dr. Boyson: Recorded exports were as follows:

	Number
June	354
July	1,286
August	1,577

Figures for September and October are not yet available.

Cattle Imports

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cattle were imported from the Republic of Ireland and immediately slaughtered in each of the marketing weeks of August, September and October, respectively.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

Week Commencing	
5 August 1985	862
12 August 1985	1,997
19 August 1985	2,049
26 August 1985	2,610
2 September 1985	2,559
9 September 1985	3,243
16 September 1985	3,441
23 September 1985	4,424
30 September 1985	3,893
7 October 1985	5,758
14 October 1985	3,812

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many store cattle were imported from the Republic of Ireland during the months of August, September and October, respectively.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	Numbers
August	7,097
September	9,204
October (3 weeks)	6,986

De Lorean (RUC Investigations)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to his answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column 64, when the investigations being carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary into the alleged misappropriation of funds from De Lorean Motor Cars Limited are likely to be completed.

Mr. Tom King: I have nothing to add to my answer of 21 October.

THE ARTS

Merseyside

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister for the Arts if he will outline the provision for the funding of the arts in the county of Merseyside from 1 April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *315*]: The Government announced last year that £34 million of additional central funding would be made available in 1986-87 for support of the performing arts, film and museums following the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils, after allowing for a contribution from borough and district authorities relieved of precepts. Of this sum, £16 million for the performing arts would be administered by the Arts Council and £1 million for film by the British Film Institute. The remaining £17 million would be for museums.

It will be for the Arts Council and British Film Institute to determine, from within the resources available to them, the funding which they will pass to bodies in the area now administered by Merseyside county council. A new national trustee body will be established by Order in Council under section 46 of the Local Government Act 1985 to own and manage the bulk of the existing Merseyside museums and art galleries service. Its budget for 1986-87, which has yet to be determined, will be met from within the additional £17 million for museums.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Expenditure

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total Government expenditure for the years 1975 to 1985, inclusive, expressed *(a)* at current prices, *(b)* in cost terms and *(c)* as a percentage of gross domestic product at market prices.

Mr. MacGregor: Detailed figures of public expenditure over the period 1974-75 to 1984-85 were given in an article entitled "Measuring Public Expenditure" published in the August 1985 issue of *Economic Trends*.

The figures requested have been extracted from the above named article and are as follows:

Planning totals

£ billion

Year	*Cash*	**Real terms*	*†Public expenditure as a percentage of GDP*	*‡GGE as a percentage of GDP*
1974-75	39·4	119·5	45·5	47·9
1975-76	48·9	118·1	45·7	48·5
1976-77	54·5	116·3	43·9	46·0
1977-78	56·8	106·6	39·7	42·3
1978-79	65·8	111·7	40·2	43·3

Year	Cash	*Real terms	†Public expenditure as a percentage of GDP	‡GGE as a percentage of GDP
1979-80	77·0	112·3	39·7	43·4
1980-81	92·7	113·9	42·2	46·0
1981-82	104·7	117·0	43·5	46·3
1982-83	113·4	118·6	43·0	46·7
1983-84	120·3	120·3	42·6	45·8
1984-85	129·7	124·2	43·3	45·8

* Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices (1983-84 base year)
† As defined for the calculation of public expenditure as a percentage of GDP in the 1985 public expenditure White Paper
‡ General Government expenditure as defined in the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and national accounts.

National Debt

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the trend in the size of the national debt in real terms in the past decade.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Gow: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Inland Revenue (Staff)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the approximate proportions, for each Inland Revenue region, of tax officers higher grade with *(a)* less than one year's experience, *(b)* between one and five years' experience and *(c)* more than five years' experience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

Tax officers higher grade
per cent.

	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	More than 5 years
Head Office	3	13	84
London North	16	44	40
London East	18	41	41
London South	18	41	41
London West	17	36	47
North	15	17	68
South Yorkshire	15	25	60
Eastern Counties	19	28	53
South East	19	30	51
South West	11	28	61
West Midlands	19	25	56
Greater Manchester	13	18	69
North West	12	26	62
Wales	9	21	70
Scotland	13	28	59
Northern Ireland	18	33	49
TOTAL	15	26	59

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the approximate proportions, for each Inland Revenue region, of tax officers with *(a)* less than one year's experience, *(b)* between one and five years' experience, *(c)* more than five years' experience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

Tax Officers
per cent.

	Less than one year	One to five years	More than five years
Head office	3	25	72
London North	19	30	51
London East	15	35	50
London South	24	34	42
London West	20	33	47
North	17	19	64
South Yorkshire	14	24	62
Eastern counties	17	34	49
South East	28	31	41
South West	19	28	53
West Midlands	18	23	59
Greater Manchester	10	21	69
North West	11	25	64
Wales	2	34	64
Scotland	19	26	55
Northern Ireland	10	23	67
Total	16	27	57

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, for Inland Revenue staffing in each of the last three years *(a)* the average number of inspectors of taxes, *(b)* the number of recruitments and promotions to inspector of taxes, *(c)* the number of retirements of inspectors of taxes and *(d)* the number of resignations of inspectors of taxes.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

Year to 31 March

	1983	1984	1985
a. The average number of inspectors of taxes	6,378	6,402	6,425
b. The number of recruitments and promotions to inspector of taxes	558	662	731
c. The number of retirements of inspectors of taxes	279	224	257
d. The number of resignations of inspectors of taxes	53	70	170

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, for Inland Revenue staffing in each of the last three years *(a)* the average number of tax officers higher grade, *(b)* the number of recruitments and promotion to tax officer higher grade, *(c)* the number of retirements of tax officers higher grade and *(d)* the number of resignations of tax officers higher grade.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

	Year to 31 March		
	1983	1984	1985
a. The average number of tax officers higher grade	9,670	9,826	10,309
b. The number of recruitments and promotions to tax officer higher grade	771	926	1,339
c. The number of retirements of tax officer higher grade	188	205	175
d. The number of resignations of tax officer higher grade	209	238	270

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, for Inland Revenue staffing in each of the last three years *(a)* the average number of tax officers, *(b)* the number of recruitments and promotions to the tax officer grade, *(c)* the number of retirements from the tax officer grade and *(d)* the number of resignations from the tax officer grade.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows.

	Year to 31 March		
	1983	1984	1985
a. The average number of tax officers	15,755	15,111	14,240
b. The number of recruitments and promotions to tax officer	1,395	564	2,030
c. The number of retirements of tax officers	236	434	282
d. The number of resignations of tax officers	831	870	886

Arts Donations

Mr. Speller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to exempt from tax donations to the arts by private or corporate donors, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion. Many bodies concerned with the arts are charities, and donations made to them under deed of covenant already qualify for tax relief.

EC (Finance Ministers' Meeting)

Mrs. Currie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Council of Finance Ministers.

Mr. Gow: The ECOFIN Council met in Luxembourg on 28 October. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council has preliminary discussions on the Commission's annual economic report and the recent Greek economic measures. Lord Cockfield put forward the Commission's views on indirect tax harmonisation. The Council agreed to return to these matters at its next meeting, on 18 November.

The Council discussed the proposal in the Commission's amending letter of 11 October to increase the 1986 budget provision for the United Kingdom's 1986 VAT abatement under the Fontainebleau system by 264 mecu (some £155 million). The Council agreed that the United Kingdon was entitled to receive this additional sum during 1986. The Commission was invited to bring forward an amending budget in September 1986, which would take account of the 264 mecu and of any other corrections indicated by the latest budgetary information, and the Council undertook to take the necessary decisions on the basis of the Commission's proposal.

I proposed that the Community should take an early opportunity to consider how the financial guideline limiting agricultural spending should be applied to the Community of Twelve. The Commission undertook to prepare a communication to the Council about this.

Finally, considerable progress was made in the Council's discussion on liberalising the marketing of unit trusts throughout the Community. Subject to a waiting reserve by Denmark, the Council agreed the texts of co-ordination and capital movements directives establishing common rules for unit trusts and other undertakings for collective investment in financial securities (UCITS). These directives are intended to take effect from October 1989.

EC (Farm Budget)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the increased costs to the draft 1980 European Economic Community farm budget caused by each percentage fall in the value of the dollar below the dollar ecu rate of 1·2 specified in that budget, what reserve contingency is available to meet these increased costs and what steps he has taken to seek to ensure that such variations in the exchange rate do not increase the farm budget beyond the agreed budgetary discipline limits.

Mr. Gow: Estimating the budgetary costs of a depreciation of the dollar against the ecu below the level of 1·20 assumed in the draft budget for 1986 is a complicated operation, which the Commission is best placed to undertake. Account has to be taken not only of the direct impact on export refunds and certain production aids but also of indirect effects such as the supply and demand response on world markets for agricultural products whose prices are denominated in dollars.

There is no contingency reserve in the draft budget for 1986 to cover such eventualities as a change in the dollar/ecu exchange rate. However, the Council agreed in its conclusions on budgetary discipline to proceed so as to keep expenditure relating to agricultural markets within the financial guideline and, if an overrun threatened, to take the necessary decisions to prevent this. The Commission has undertaken to avoid an overrun by management measures and by putting necessary policy proposals to the Council and not to introduce a supplementary budget until it has exhausted all these opportunities for savings.

Customs (Drug Imports)

Mr. Nellist asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many customs officials at ports of entry were engaged on the prevention of illegal drug importation in each year since 1960.

Mr. Gow: Separate figures for the number of customs officials at ports of entry engaged in the prevention of illegal drugs importation are not available prior to 1978. The figures from 1978 to 1986 (estimated) are as follows:

	Numbers
1 April 1978	3,274
1 April 1979	3,445

	Numbers
1 April 1980	3,214
1 April 1981	3,027
1 April 1982	2,890
1 April 1983	2,795
1 April 1984	2,721
1 April 1985	2,823
1 April 1986*	3,000

*Estimated

DEFENCE

RAF Upper Heyford (Noise Tests)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce the results of the recent noise tests at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Stanley: We intend to publish the results of the tests once decisions on the Department's noise compensation policy review have been taken. My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support intends to make an announcement on this shortly. I can, however, say that the tests indicated that a noise insulation scheme would be justified.

Aircraft Noise (North Devon)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints he has had about problems of RAF aircraft noise in urban areas in North Devon in the last 12 months; and what steps he is taking to seek to alleviate them.

Mr. Stanley: In the last 12 months, the Ministry of Defence has received eleven complaints from urban areas in north Devon about military aircraft noise. The heights and speeds at which flying training is conducted in the United Kingdom are limited in order to contain noise levels, and adherence to these limitations is closely monitored. Our rules on low flying are summarised in the Ministry of Defence leaflet "Why low flying", copies of which I am sending to my hon. Friend and am also placing in the Library.

Japan (Prisoners of War)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will take up with the Japanese authorities questions of compensation for allied prisoners who were used as guinea pigs for medical research at Mukden and elsewhere during world war II.

Mr. Stanley: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department received a letter from the hon. Member for Caernarfon, dated 22 July 1985, concerning allegations that the Japanese used prisoners of war as guinea pigs for medical experiments during world war 2; when he intends to reply to the letter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Member's letter was received on 24 July and my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will be replying shortly.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many full-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been medically discharged by the Army since 1970; of these, how many were under civilian doctor or consultant care; and how many full-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been brought before a medical board and found unfit and have subsequently been discharged on termination of engagement.

Mr. Stanley: The information is not available in the form requested. My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible with such information as can be derived from existing records.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Radar Station, Fylingdales

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the costs of improvements being made or planned at the radar station at Fylingdales; whether the United States Government are paying any portion of these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have received proposals from the United States Government to update the facilities at Fylingdales. These proposals are still under discussion with the US Government, and we have not yet made a decision. If the update were to proceed, we expect that the US Government would bear most of the cost.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what funds he has made available in each of the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 to work undertaken under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Defence expenditure on the Alvey programme totalled £2·8 million in 1984-85. Expenditure of £10·3 million is planned for 1985-86.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what approaches he has received from the United States Government, or from United States based companies, expressing an interest in the purchase of information technology arising out of defence aspects of the work of the Alvey programme; what has been his response; and whether any of these approaches have been related to the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have received no such approaches.

Official Secrets Act (Trial)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence for how long Senior Aircraftsman Gwynfor Owen was

kept in solitary confinement; what was the size of his cell; for how many days and for how long each day he was interrogated; and for how many hours he was locked up in a cell alone after his arrest on charges relating to the Official Secrets Acts.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which the seven service men based in Cyprus were *(a)* detained and *(b)* interrogated by the Provost Marshall's department after their arrest on charges relating to the Official Secrets Acts.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement in the House yesterday at c. 842-3.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) in each of the three services, what are the total numbers of ethnic minority members holding officer rank;

(2) if he will estimate the total numbers and percentages of ethnic minority members in the armed forces as a whole, and in each of the three services.

Mr. Stanley: The Ministry of Defence does not have this information.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of each armed service are black and what percentage in each case this represents of the total strength; how many members of the Royal Greenjackets are black and what percentage this represents of the total strength; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is not held by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the promotion of racial equality of opportunity in recruitment to the armed forces and on the means used to give effect to and monitor the operation of that policy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Race Relations Act 1976 applies to the armed services, subject to certain qualifications. As such, no form of racial discrimination is tolerated either in recruitment or in subsequent employment. A complaint from an individual that he had not been recruited to the armed forces on racial grounds could be brought before an industrial tribunal in the normal way. Any complaint of racial discrimination brought by a member of the armed forces concerning his treatment in the service would be fully investigated under existing redress of grievance procedures provided for in the Service Discipline Acts.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposals for the modernisation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 26 June 1985 at columns 437 and 438.

Defence Planning Committee

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the date of the next ministerial meeting of the Defence Planning Committee.

Mr. Stanley: The next ministerial meeting of the Defence Planning Committee will take place in Brussels early in December.

USS Iowa

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the USS Iowa will visit Britain in 1985.

Mr. Stanley: We have received no request from the United States Navy for such a visit.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many cruise missiles are at Greenham Common at present;

(2) how many cruise missiles are expected to be at Greenham Common in January 1986.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot at present add to what is said in paragraph 27 of Annex A to Volume I of "The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985". I also refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 26 June 1984 at column 418.

HMS Otter and Euryalus

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what parts of the refit programe for HMS Otter and HMS Euryalus which were originally to be carried out by the contractor have been subsequently carried out by industrial civil servants employed by the Royal Navy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No part of the refit of HMS Otter, originally to be carried out by the contractor, has subsequently been carried out by industrial civil servants. A missile launcher for HMS Euryalus which had been defective on supply to the contractor and as a result was damaged in setting to work, was repaired by industrial civil servants in the Portsmouth fleet maintenance and repair organisation.

Royal Navy (Reserve Forces)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any new procedures are to be introduced to improve the administration and readiness of the Royal Navy's reserve forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Royal Navy intends to introduce a system of annual reporting for most members of the Royal Fleet Reserve with effect from 1 April 1986. The arrangements will be similar to those for Army reservists which were introduced in 1981. Once a year, the Royal Navy reservists will be summoned individually, by letter, to report for one day to an annual reporting centre within 50 miles of their home. The aim is to maintain regular contact with the reservists, to verify personal details, determine current state of health and welfare, check and update documentation, and ensure that kit is complete and serviceable. Each individual will receive a payment for attendance. Annual reporting will enable the Navy to make

better use of the skills of members of the Royal Navy Fleet Reserve should the need arise, and it will help to ensure that they are ready to play their part in meeting their mobilisation commitments. I hope that employers will do all they can to help in releasing the reservists they employ so that they can meet this important commitment.

Maternity Leave

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to apply to service women the provisions of current employment protection legislation with respect to maternity leave and the right subsequently to resume employment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have no plans at present to do so.

Married Service Women

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to abolish the rule whereby, in situations which require service personnel to state their rank and number, a married service woman is obliged to give the relevant information in respect of her husband; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Married service personnel are only required to give details of the spouses in cases where that information is directly relevant.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong (Exhibition)

Sir Peter Blaker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to "Hong Kong—into the Future" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 11 to 16 November.

El Salvador (Refugees)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights about the position of refugees from El Salvador in Hondufas.

Mr. Rifkind: We are in touch with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and others in connection with the problems of these refugees. We have contributed over £1,300,000 for the relief of refugees and displaced persons in central America since 1981, £530,000 of which has gone to the UNHCR.

Irish Republic

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in respect of the current negotiations taking place between the British and Irish Government, any formal discussions have also been held with the official opposition in the Irish Republic.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Disarmament

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress on the conference on disarmament in Europe talks.

Mr. Rifkind: During the seventh session of the conference, agreement was reached on a new informal working structure. We and our allies hope that this s significant development will enable us to make progress on the practical confidence and security building measures proposed in the working documents which we and our allies have tabled.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the conference on disarmament in Europe talks in Geneva.

Mr. Rifkind: The conference completed its programme of work for 1985 on 30 August and will resume on 4 February 1986. Useful discussions have taken place this year under all agenda items. The United Kingdom has participated actively and constructively and we have tabled four working papers: two on chemical weapons, one on seismic monitoring for a comprehensive nuclear test ban, and one on the principal international agreements relevant to outer space. Limited progress was made in the negotiations for a total ban on chemical weapons. This will continue to be the United Kingdom's main priority at the conference throughout 1986, when the Leader of the United Kingdom delegation will be chairing the negotiations on chemical weapons.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made at the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna.

Mr. Rifkind: There is no significant progress to report from the mutual and balanced forces reductions talks. During the 37th round which will end on 5 December, we and our allies have continued to explore eastern positions in the hope of identifying ways forward.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Council of Ministers

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The usual written forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present, nine meetings of the Council are scheduled for November.

The Fisheries Council is expected to meet on 4 November to consider Norway pout; Monkfish and Megrim quotas; increase in plaice total allowable catch quotas in zone 7F and G; marketing standards for shrimps and certain fresh and chilled fish; relations with certain third world countries and international organisations; flat rate quotas for hake, horse mackerel and blue whiting for Spain in 1986; and, possibly, proposals on improving fishing control measures and on technical measures in the Baltic and the Belts.

The Development Council is scheduled to meet on 11 November to discuss the famine in Africa; co-ordination of member states' aid policies; women in development, and trade promotion.

The Energy Council is also scheduled to meet on 11 November to consider the investment proposal for solid fuels; coal aid social measures; state aids for coal; subsidised coking coal; demonstration projects and projects in the hydrocarbons sector; energy objectives; the oxygenate directive and oil refining and oil product prices.

The Transport Council is expected to meet on 14-15 November. Shipping matters to be discussed are unfair practices, the freedom to provide services, cargo sharing and competition rules. Aviation tariffs, capacity and competition rules will also be on the agenda. The Council will additionally discuss drivers' hours, and haulage capacity, lorry weights, drive axle, the Italian 'master plan' initiative and relations with Austria. It is hoped that the Council will be able to start finalising plans for the European Road Safety Year in 1986. Road quotas for Spain and Portugal and the plating directives are possible agenda items.

The Economic and Finance Council is expected to meet on 18 November to continue discussion on the annual report on the economic situation in the Community, and on the recent economic measures in Greece. The Council is also likely to consider proposals for amendments to the Treaty of Rome in respect of the European monetary system; indirect tax approximation in the context of the internal market; and the calculation of commercial interest reference rates which apply to export finance. The Council will probably give final agreement to the Unit Trusts and associated capital movements Directives.

The Agriculture Council is scheduled to meet on 18/19 November to resume its discussion on cereal and rapeseed prices for 1985-86 and the Commission's Green Paper on perspectives for the CAP. It is also expected to consider the review of the sugar regime; ACP — African, Caribbean and Pacific states — sugar; sugar for the chemical industry; starch production refunds; olive oil consumption aid; hormones; and pesticide residues in cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin.

The Foreign Affairs Council is expected to meet on 25/26 November to discuss a negotiating mandate for adaptation protocols to amend the trade regimes under the Community's agreements with Mediterranean countries to take account of enlargement; the Community's trade relations with the United States and Japan, and proposals for special measures to be adopted under ERDF regulation to support regions of the community affected by the difficulties facing the textiles, shipbuilding and fisheries industries, and certain problems faced by border areas.

The Budget Council is expected to meet on 26 November to consider the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the 1986 draft budget of the European Communities.

The Environment Council is due to meet on 28 November to discuss a directive on agreed limits on vehicle exhaust emissions, a directive on the reduction in emissions of sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and dust from all existing large combustion plants, the new water directive, the regeneration of waste oils, the harmonisation of member states' programmes for the reduction and eventual elimination of pollution by wastes from industrial establishments, safeguarding against possible harmful effects from the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land, a proposed directive to reduce the maximum permitted sulphur content of gas oil, and the marine pollution information system.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Attorney-General what salary scale and conditions the Director of Public Prosecutions intends to offer solicitors and barristers taking up posts in the Crown prosecution service *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere in England and Wales, following enactment of the Prosecution of Offenders Act 1985; and what information he has as to how these compare with the average remuneration available to solicitors and barristers engaged in private work.

The Solicitor-General: The posts of barristers and solicitors employed in a professional capacity in the Crown prosecution service will be graded at one of the following levels:

Crown prosecutor
Senior crown prosecutor
Grade 6
Grade 5
Grade 4
Grade 3
Grade 2
Grade 1

Subject to pay protection arrangements which it is intended to include in regulations to be made under section 11 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 in relation to staff transferring from other authorities, the salary scales of such persons will be those applicable to their grade. All the above grades except Crown prosecutor and senior Crown prosecutor are of general application within the Civil Service. The grades of senior Crown prosecutor and Crown prosecutor will be special to the new service. The Director of Public Prosecutions has proposed that the former should correspond with that of principal in the Civil Service and that there should be a salary scale for the latter of £9,700-£14,000. I am at present considering representations from staff representatives on this issue. Staff employed in London will receive a London weighting allowance appropriate to the location of their office. Conditions of service will be those applicable to the Civil Service generally subject to such reserved rights as may be appropriate in relation to staff transferring from other authorities. These are at present the subject of discussions between officials of the Director of Public Prosecutions and representatives of the relevant unions.

The average remuneration of solicitors and barristers in private practice is not known centrally.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General what are the respective roles of the criminal names index of the police national computer and the electoral register in jury vetting.

The Solicitor-General: When a jury vetting is authorised by my right hon. and learned Friend the criminal names index of the police national computer may be examined by police. The electoral register may be consulted as necessary to assist in confirming the identity of a potential juror.

Gillick v. West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA and the DHSS

Ms. Richardson asked the Attorney-General what is the total cost to public funds of all stages of the legal proceedings in Gillick v. West Norfolk and Wisbech area health authority and the Department of Health and Social Security.

The Solicitor-General: The total costs incurred on Mrs. Gillick's behalf by the legal aid fund will not be known until her lawyers' bills have been submitted and taxed in the usual way. However, it is not the practice to disclose the sums involved in individual cases. The costs incurred by the DHSS are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Official Secrets Acts (Trial)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General if he will state the criteria used and the factors taken into account by the Director of Public Prosecutions in deciding to bring prosecutions in the case of the seven service men based in Cyprus for alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions in deciding to bring the prosecutions, and the Attorney-General in deciding to give his consent, each directed himself by reference to and in accordance with the guidelines on "Criteria for Prosecution" published by the Attorney-General in February 1983, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what has been the total cost to public funds to date of the trial of the seven service men based in Cyprus on charges relating to the Official Secrets Acts.

The Solicitor-General: The total cost to public funds of an individual trial cannot at any date be ascertained. It comprises numerous elements borne by different Government Departments. For the most part these are absorbed in the general running costs of the Department concerned. It is not the practice to publish individual fees payable to counsel or solicitors from public funds, which in any event cannot be ascertained until after taxation of bills of costs.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Jopling: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Deer

Mr. John Fraser asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to prevent the factory farming of deer and their transport for slaughter.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton).

Veal Crates

Mr. John Fraser asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the use of veal crates to be phased out.

Mrs. Fenner: The code of recommendations for the welfare of cattle, which was approved by Parliament in 1982, militates against methods associated with the veal crate system and recommends livestock keepers to consider the adoption of loose-housing systems.

Loose-housing systems are being increasingly used and most calves reared for veal are now kept in such systems.

The Government welcome this shift away from the veal crate system and will continue to encourage compliance with the recommendations of the welfare codes.

Nutritional Labelling

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish his proposals for legislation on nutritional labelling.

Mrs. Fenner: The preliminary stage of consultation with interested parties on the introduction of fat and nutrition labelling is now concluded. We aim to publish proposals for comment within the next two months.

Sugar

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposal of the European Commission contained in draft instrument R 8687/85 Com (85) 433, to retain the existing quota levels for sugar production.

Mr. Jopling: I consider that the current system of basing B quotas on production performance has encouraged over-production and that, given the current surplus, they should instead be allocated on a standardised percentage of the A quotas for all member states, in such a way as to lead to an overall reduction.

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the increase, in pence per kilogramme, of the cost of production of African, Caribbean and Pacific raw cane sugar imported into the United Kingdom from Mauritius, Guyana and Jamaica over the past five years.

Mr. Jopling: I regret that the information requested is not readily available.

Inclement Weather (Compensation)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now provide details of his proposed compensation arrangements to relieve agriculture from the effects of inclement weather in areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 24 October 1985 [Vol. 84, c. 258].

Paraquat

Mr. Ashdown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when the Advisory Committee on Pesticides last made a full review of the commercial clearance of paraquat; when the next such full review is intended to take place; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the Advisory Committee on Pesticides last considered the conditions under which paraquat, and preparations containing paraquat, may be sold; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Advisory Committee on Pesticides last reviewed and discussed the commercial clearances of the formulations of paraquat currently available in January 1982. The committee has also received a number of information papers on paraquat and the scientific sub-committee has kept the clearances and uses of paraquat under continuous scrutiny since that date. The timing of the next full review will depend, to some extent, on the results of the public consultation on the implementation of part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of deaths attributable to poisoning by paraquat, both accidental and otherwise, in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Fenner: The number of deaths attributable to poisoning by paraquat, both accidental or otherwise, in each of the most recent five years for which figures are available are given in the table below:

Deaths from poisoning—England and Wales

	Paraquat	
	Suicide	*Others*
1978	32	14
1979	26	10
1980	17	7
1981*	—	—
1982	21	6
1983	26	9

* Figures not available.
Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.
Note: None of these deaths were attributable to the normal agricultural use of paraquat.

Development Awards

Mr. Nicholson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to review the level of development awards from tribunals and panels which were limited to that necessary to meet the dairy producer's expected production in 1984-85.

Mr. Jopling: No. I have already announced on 30 July how I propose to use the remainder of quota acquired under the outgoers' scheme in England and Wales.

Intervention and Assisted Private Storage (Stocks)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a complete list of United Kingdom and European Community agricultural produce in public intervention and assisted private storage in England and the United Kingdom, respectively, the amount held and values at the latest available date.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to the reply*, Thursday 24 October 1985, c. *256*]: The information requested is set out in the tables below. They set out the position at 30 September 1985. The values are calculated on the basis of the buying prices at that date. No values are provided for assisted private storage stocks since these are privately owned.

TABLE 1
Intervention stocks in England and in the United Kingdom

Commodity	*England*		*United Kingdom*	
	Tonnes	*£ million (approx)*	*Tonnes*	*£ million (approx)*
Beef	35,595	86·5	69,000	174·3
Feedwheat	3,281,379	369·5	3,361,664	378·5
Barley	1,364,354	153·6	1,791,590	201·7
Breadwheat	19,386	*2·3	19,386	*2·3
Rye	115	0·013	115	0·013
Butter	147,017	277·9	203,791	385·2
Skimmed Milk Powder	19,295	20·7	40,801	43·9

* Provisional figure.
Source: Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

TABLE 2
Assisted private storage stocks in England and the United Kingdom

Commodity	*England*	*United Kingdom*
	Tonnes	*Tonnes*
Beef	2,684	7,907
Pigmeat	845	875
Butter	9,116	12,445

Source: Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

WALES

Inclement Weather (Compensation)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to implement Her Majesty's Government's commitment of 8 October to help livestock farmers affected by poor hay harvests in Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: An announcement will be made shortly.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating how many of the senior civil servants in his Department are Welsh-speaking.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Of the 114 staff in the open structure, 60 are Welsh speakers.

European Regional Development Fund

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list Wales's share, in percentage terms, of the British allocation of the European regional development fund in each year since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The commitments to Welsh projects by the European regional development fund since 1975 as compared with the United Kingdom as a whole are as follows:—

	*1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	Total
United Kingdom (£ million)		150·4		99·7	162·8	153·4	193·7	245·7	243·5	345·2	1594·5
Wales (£ million)		21·1		17·1	21·7	32·5	24·8	47·3	45·1	56·3	265·9
Approximate Welsh percentage of United Kingdom commitment		14		17	13	21	13	19	18	16	17

* Individual United Kingdom figures for the years 1975 to 1977 are not available.

For 1985 Wales has to date received commitment amounting to £5·4 million under the fund; this compares with £81 million for the United Kingdom as a whole. However I look forward to the Commission approving further substantial tranches of aid to Wales from the fund in the course of this year and next on the basis that bids totalling over £87 million in grant already submitted to Brussels by the Welsh Office are awaiting decision.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the provision for spending by each of the health authorities in Wales in each fiscal year since 1978 in 1985 prices.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Provision for spending by each health authority in Wales at 1985 prices

1985-86 prices £000's

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86*
Clwyd	63,640	66,668	75,118	75,886	76,832	75,100	79,463	83,025
East Dyfed	53,598	55,284	58,942	60,709	46,948	49,205	50,104	49,558
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—	15,245	15,783	17,348	17,384
Gwent	82,281	85,831	93,021	93,424	94,719	96,529	98,070	97,836
Gwynedd	37,071	39,304	42,456	42,877	43,835	44,155	49,412	48,151
Mid Glamorgan	96,379	97,055	103,857	106,741	106,179	107,517	113,547	116,623
Powys	18,650	19,298	20,672	21,471	21,726	22,202	22,819	22,497
South Glamorgan	119,037	115,337	125,320	129,319	130,561	128,449	132,049	128,560
West Glamorgan	63,777	65,289	71,153	72,736	74,041	74,146	77,077	82,352
Central Reserves	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10,938
TOTAL	534,433	544,066	590,539	603,163	610,086	613,086	639,889	656,924

* Provisional.

Notes:

(1) The allocations have been adjusted to take account of general inflation as measured by the GDP market price deflator.

(2) Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.

(3) The figures (other than for 1985-86) reflect the end-of-year notified allocations to health authorities for capital and revenue purposes. They do not include any provisions for family practitioner services since expenditure on these services is demand determined and since family practitioner committees became independent of health authorities with effect from 1 April 1985.

(4) The allocations to authorities for 1985-86 are provisional since they reflect only those resources which have been allocated to date. A further £10·9 million is currently being held in central reserves for further developments in the services provided by health authorities. It will be released during the remainder of the financial year.

(5) The figures include both recurrent and non-recurrent provisions.

BBC (Peacock Committee)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has given to the Peacock committee inquiry into the financing of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Engagements

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his official engagements on 4 November.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have ministerial meetings and a number of engagements in London on that day.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the percentage of the work force in Wales employed in manufacturing industry at the latest date, in 1980 and in 1975.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The estimated percentages of employees in employment in Wales in manufacturing at the dates requested were as follows:

	Percentage
June 1985	22·6
June 1980	28·7
June 1975	31·7

District Health Authorities

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the numbers employed by each district

health authority from 1981-82 to 1984-85 and expected numbers employed in 1985-86 for each of the following categories *(a)* medical nursing, *(b)* paramedical and technical, *(c)* administrative and clerical, *(d)* ancillary and *(e)* others.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information relating to the period 1981-84 is given in the following table. Figures for 1985-86 have yet to be finalised.

*Staff employed by district health authorities (whole-time equivalents)**

	Medical and dental	*Nursing and midwifery*	*Paramedical and technical*	*Administrative and clerical*	*Ancillary*	*Others†*
Clwyd						
1981	268	3,427	416	705	1,383	404
1982	273	3,503	439	708	1,383	399
1983	283	3,498	441	651	1,350	395
1984	277	3,528	467	704	1,289	401
East Dyfed						
1981	225	2,507	343	603	1,176	376
1982	173	1,966	265	470	917	292
1983	179	2,042	281	489	919	286
1984	186	2,106	304	501	849	291
Pembrokeshire‡						
1981	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982	60	631	91	124	259	90
1983	71	615	100	145	243	93
1984	66	640	108	156	232	87
Gwent						
1981	330	4,061	550	872	2,019	548
1982	338	4,141	571	887	1,978	563
1983	342	4,221	619	900	1,927	557
1984	340	4,312	649	936	1,790	553
Gwynedd						
1981	147	1,918	247	450	795	323
1982	152	1,890	270	465	794	316
1983	151	1,862	278	469	775	331
1984	164	1,946	335	516	823	354
Mid Glamorgan						
1981	373	4,834	574	1,007	2,255	648
1982	379	4,918	577	1,012	2,272	646
1983	379	4,904	595	1,014	2,241	639
1984	392	5,032	644	1,035	2,147	643
Powys						
1981	34	1,014	81	172	412	167
1982	33	1,092	96	169	410	182
1983	35	1,149	98	178	418	182
1984	34	1,121	111	172	395	179
South Glamorgan						
1981	634	4,523	1,166	1,429	2,285	560
1982	644	4,607	1,120	1,447	2,266	568
1983	660	4,490	1,244	1,469	2,244	560
1984	653	4,565	1,321	1,443	2,076	580
West Glamorgan						
1981	297	3,078	472	681	1,496	328
1982	301	3,161	499	689	1,486	337
1983	304	3,200	505	702	1,444	333
1984	308	3,198	527	710	1,351	356

* As at 30 September.
† Ambulance, works and maintenance staff.
‡ Pembrokeshire figures are included with East Dyfed for 1981.

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the outturn revenue spending of each district health authority from 1981-82 to 1984-85 and the budgeted revenue spending for 1985-86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Revenue expenditure by Welsh district health authorities

£000's

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86 Budgeted
Clwyd	59,244	64,125	66,898	71,638	76,957
East Dyfed	48,307	39,698	43,003	46,076	48,006
Pembrokeshire	—	12,942	13,958	15,163	15,572
Gwent	73,047	79,565	84,567	89,279	94,064
Gwynedd	34,257	37,236	39,666	44,204	46,609
Mid Glamorgan	84,071	90,806	96,980	104,022	107,307
Powys	16,624	18,516	19,754	20,627	21,388
South Glamorgan	98,793	107,438	114,501	119,313	125,594
West Glamorgan	56,665	61,508	65,173	68,667	74,699
TOTAL	471,008	511,834	544,500	578,989	610,196

Notes:

1. The figures are for all revenue (i.e. current) expenditure excluding payments to doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians and others providing services under contracts with family practitioner committees.
2. The figures for 1981-82 to 1984-85 are derived from the accounts of health authorities submitted to the Department. Figures for 1984-85 are at this stage provisional.
3. Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.
4. The figures provided for 1985-86 reflect the latest notified revenue allocations. A further £8·08 million remains in centrally held reserves for the further development of the services provided by health authorities. It will be released during the remainder of the financial year.
5. The out-turn figures for 1981-82 to 1984-85 include the expenditure of income generated locally by health authorities and are therefore not fully comparable with the Department's allocations to districts for 1985-86. The amount of such income in 1984-85 is estimated at £1·5 million.

Dairy Producers

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total awards made by tribunals and panels to each of the three categories of special cases of dairy producers in Wales in 1984-85.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Separate figures for Wales are not available, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total quota requirement to restore small producers to their 1983 milk production levels in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Separate figures for Wales are not available, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of young people on youth training scheme programmes go on to full-time employment in Wales and by each county in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is only available at Manpower Services Commission area office level. The most recent published results of a sample survey of young people who left youth training schemes in Wales related to the period between July and September 1984. The survey showed the following percentages of youth training scheme leavers going into full-time employment:

	Per cent.
Wales	49
Mid and South Glamorgan	44
West Glamorgan and Dyfed	45
Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys	54
Gwent	53

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the gross domestic product of Wales in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how this compares with 1980 and 1975 in real and cash terms.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The figures requested are as follows:

GDP for Wales	*£ million (current prices)*
1983*	10,184
1980	8,079
1975	4,193

*Provisional.

Figures for GDP in constant price terms are not available for Wales.

Incomes and Wages

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average family income, personal income and wage for Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: the most recent regional information on average household income, the wages and salaries component of that income, and the average numbers of persons per household (from which personal incomes can be derived) is given in the Department of employment publication "Family Expenditure Survey 1983", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

District Councils (Welsh Names)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce legislation to amend the Local Government Act 1972, so as to enable all district councils in Wales to use the Welsh form of their name for official purposes and in official documents.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Councils in Wales can already use the Welsh form of their name in all their dealings side by side with the English equivalent.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people are currently on Welsh housing authority waiting lists at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) how many *(a)* private and *(b)* public housing starts have been made in each Welsh district authority so far in 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether, during the past six months, he has placed any financial restrictions on the Welsh Development Agency as regards the scale of its factory building programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have placed no financial restrictions on the scale of the Welsh Development Agency's factory building programme over the last six months.

Felinheli Bypass

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there has been any change to the timetable for the construction of the Felinheli bypass as indicated by the then Minister of State, the hon. Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas), at a meeting with the hon. Member for Caernarfon on 20 February and in a subsequent letter to the hon. Member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

ENVIRONMENT

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Act 1985

1. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any reaction from the Football League as to the financial effects on football clubs following the enactment of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Act.

Mr. Tracey: The responsibility for this Act lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to whom the hon. Member's question should have been re-directed. I apologise to the hon. Member for the fact that this was not done.

In answer to the hon. Member's question, I have recently received a letter from the Football League expressing concern in general terms about the financial effects of the Act. My right hon. Friend informs me that he has asked the league for more detailed information and expects to receive it very shortly.

Gleneagles Agreement

2. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the operation in the United Kingdom of the Gleneagles agreement, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Since taking office I hae received seven letters on this issue, three from organisations, one from my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) covering one from a constituent, and three from the public. I have informed these correspondents, and have indicated publicly on several recent occasions, that it remains the Government's policy to uphold the Gleneagles agreement.

Northern Region (Rates)

3. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will estimate the amount of commercial and business rates paid in the current year in the northern region.

Mr. Waldegrave: The amount of commercial and business rates paid in the northern region is estimated to be about £330 million in 1985-86.

Local Authority Services

4. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received proposing that local authorities be compelled to put services out to competitive tender.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As my hon. Friend will be aware, we have ourselves published proposals for the extension of competition in local authority services. More than 450 responses have been received up to the end of September. I have today placed in the Library a list of the main respondents.

22. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many district or borough level arrangements for waste management he has so far approved under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Act does not provide for such approval. The latest position is set out in my answer of 25 October, at columns 266-67, to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield, (Mr. King). As it is rather long, I shall be pleased to send the hon. Gentleman a copy.

29. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for the continuation of the waste disposal services in the metropolitan county areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: The arrangements are contained in the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on 25 October, at columns 266-67. As it is rather long, I shall be pleased to send the hon. Gentleman a copy.

Local Authorities (Finance)

5. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the annual report of the Audit Commission concerning systems for controlling local authorities' revenue and capital spending.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcomed the commission's report on the capital control system when it was published as a useful contribution to our review of the system. We will be responding fully to the report on the block grant distribution system when we have examined the Public Accounts Committee's findings following a parallel report by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

13. **Mr. Foster** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the report of the study of local government finance conducted by the Minister for Local Government will include tables of the likely effect of any proposed charges upon different types of household and for each district in England.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It will contain the material necessary for the wide-ranging consultation we shall be seeking.

16. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the studies on local government finance will be published.

34. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of studies into the future of local government finance.

35. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the conclusions of the report of the inquiry into British housing, a copy of which has been sent to him.

46. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects the study of local government finance to be published and in what form.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We hope to publish proposals in a consultative document at about the turn of the year.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have applied and subsequently received a relaxation of the prescribed proportion of capital receipts.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand the hon. Member is referring to the supplementary capital expenditure allocations for 1985-86 given to English local authorities which complied with the Government's request for restraint on capital spending in 1984-85. Two hundred and thirty two authorities have received such allocations so far. One hundred and eighteen authorities have admitted non-compliance with the restraint and another 48 authorities have had their applications rejected. The position of the remaining 16 authorities will be determined once they have provided the information requested of them.

Green Belt

6. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on his policy for the green belt.

19. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future and the protection of the metropolitan green belt.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have received a number of such representations. I share the widely-felt concern for the protection of green belt land. The Department's circular 14/84 reaffirmed the importance which the Government attach to green belts and the general presumption against inappropriate development within them.

50. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of land are now protected by green belts and how this compares with the position six years ago.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In total about 4½ million acres are now fully protected as green belt. When we took office, only about half of this total had been formally approved and about 1·8 million acres of the total was dependant upon detailed application in a miscellany of old development plans.

Peterlee Development Corporation

7. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider a further extension of the period of winding-up of Peterlee development corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. The Government considered this matter extensively prior to the announcement on 21 March this year by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), which extended the lives of the Aycliffe and Peterlee and the Washington development corporations until 31 March 1988. It is important that the development corporations should continue to make progress towards establishing satisfactory succesion arrangements, as called for by my right hon. Friend, and uncertainty about the wind-up date would not help in this.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

8. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received about privatising the water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Forty-two.

Urban Programme Funding

9. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the capital and revenue levels of urban programme funding for 1985-86.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has received a number of requests for increased funding and a number of representations about the balance between capital and current expenditure.

Local Authorities (Co-opted Members)

10. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prohibit co-opted members from voting on local authority committees.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have asked the Widdicombe inquiry to consider within their general terms of reference the issue of co-options to local authority committees. We shall look at the need for legislation in the light of the inquiry's report which we expect next year.

Falklands and Ascension Islands (Airport Construction)

11. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of recent construction works at Mount Pleasant airport in the Falklands and Wideawake airport on Ascension Island.

Sir George Young: The latest estimate for the RAF project at Mount Pleasant in the Falkland Islands is £297 million, plus £10 million for MOD supplied navigation aids. The latest estimate for the separate Army project is £130 million.

The latest estimate for the works at Wideawake air base on Ascension Island is £50 million.

All estimates take account of price changes due to inflation up to September 1985.

Sporting Events (Crowd Control)

12. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give an up-to-date report on the discussions he has had about crowd behaviour at sporting events.

Mr. Tracey: The Government's concern has been primarily with crowd behaviour at football matches, though we are watchful for problems at other sports. Our discussions with the football authorities continue in my working group. A package of measures has been agreed; many of them, like our alcohol legislation, are in force. We continue to discuss the implementation of particular measures like membership cards and CCTV and to review needs and any fresh proposals that come forward.

Country Structure Plans

14. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to seek to ensure adherence by county councils to structure plans evolved following public consultation.

Mr. Tracey: In considering planning applications, local planning authorities must have regard to the structure plan and any local plans together with other material considerations. It is for county councils to keep their structure plans under review, and to propose alterations as necessary.

25. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the level of development for its structure plans for counties in southern England during the last three months.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have received a number of such representations. Where these relate to structure plan alterations submitted but not yet approved, I shall consider them carefully before taking a final decision.

Housebuilding

15. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest housebuilding figures in the public and private sectors.

33. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest housebuilding figures.

Mr. John Patten: Estimates of housebuilding performance during the first eight months of this year were published on 3 October in my Department's press notice No. 482, which is available in the Library.

North of England County Councils Association

17. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives of the north of England County Councils Association about its sixth state of the region report, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), met representatives of the association to discuss the report on 19 June this year. The meeting was also attended by ministerial colleagues from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment. Discussions covered a wide range of issues arising from the report.

London Docklands Development

18. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by the London Dockland's development corporation in providing homes and jobs in London's docklands.

Sir George Young: 2,466 housing units have been completed and occupied between the corporation's inception in July 1981 and March 1985. A further 4,617 dwellings are contained within sites which are under construction and approximately 2,400 are planned to start in 1985-86. 5,700 jobs have been created in the area, including an average of 1,500 jobs in construction at any one time and 200 companies have moved into docklands since 1981.

These are substantial achievements which Ministers are determined to maintain.

Housing Accommodation (Young Tenants)

20. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to stimulate the availability of low-cost related accommodation for young tenants.

Sir George Young: We have encouraged local authorities to concentrate their resources on those in special need, a category which includes homeless young people at risk of sexual or finanical exploitation. In addition, the Housing Corporation's programme for 1985-86 includes £550 million for expenditure on providing fair rent and hostel accommodation, and many young people will be among those benefiting from that expenditure.

Water Pollution

21. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in improving the quality of water in rivers and estuaries.

Mr. Waldegrave: During the last two years there have been notable improvements to the Tees and the Tyne. The Mersey clean up continues. Another national survey of all our rivers and estuaries will take place next year.

Thamesmead

23. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of consultation on the future control of Thamesmead.

Sir George Young: Consultation was completed last week and on 25 and 26 October all adult residents were invited to indicate their preference between a private trust controlled by local residents of Thamesmead, a similar organisation controlled by Greenwich council or neither of these options. The ballot is being conducted by consultants under the supervision of the Electoral Reform Society. The result should be announced on or about 6 November 1985.

Long Leaseholders (Safeguards)

24. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received advocating safeguarding the position of long leaseholds in privately-owned flats.

Mr. John Patten: My Department has in recent years received a substantial number of letters from individuals and organisations about the problems associated with leasehold flats. In addition, the committee which is examining, under the chairmanship of Mr. Edward Nugee QC, the management of privately owned block of flats has received a large amount of evidence about such problems. I expect to receive its report shortly.

Housing Finance

26. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's housing policy in the light of the recent report of the inquiry chaired by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh on housing finance, a copy of which has been sent to him.

31. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's housing policy in the light of the report of the inquiry into british housing chaired by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It remains our policy to encourage the maximum spread of owner-occupation, and the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock, while ensuring a vigorous housing association movement.

The Government also hope to introduce legislation to encourage the supply of more homes for renting in the private sector, but probably not during the lifetime of this Parliament.

We shall study carefully the report of the inquiry into british housing, bearing in mind that it deliberately adopted a longer-term perspective.

Council House Sales

27. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has to encourage an increase in the number of sales of local authority housing.

Mr. John Patten: I have announced proposals for legislation to give better protection against high service charges to tenants exercising the right to buy their flats. Other measures to promote sales under the right to buy and by agreement are under consideration.

41. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for levels of local authority housing investment of his policy in relation to council house sales.

Sir George Young: Council house sales have been beneficial in that they have generated very substantial capital receipts—almost £4 billion to June 1985. Local authorities can use the prescribed proportion of those receipts to augment their housing investment programmes. Sales do not of themselves increase the need for housing investment, since the change of tenure does not take the house out of the housing stock.

42. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Mr. John Patten: From April 1979 to June 1985 about 647,000 dwellings were sold to sitting tenants by local authorities and new towns in England. If sales of vacant dwellings are included, the total is about 688,000.

58. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes have been sold under the right-to-buy facility by Teignbridge district council since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: Teignbridge district council has reported 906 sales completed under the right to buy between October 1980 and June 1985.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many extra council and corporation houses have been sold over the last two years *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in Basildon since the discount was increased to 60 per cent.

Sir George Young: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Law of Property Act 1925

28. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has any plans to amend section 193 of the Law of Property Act 1925.

Mrs. Rumbold: Not at present. We are awaiting the report of the Common Land Forum before taking a view on the promotion of new commons legislation.

Labour Mobility

30. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce new measures to assist workers seeking to move from low-cost housing regions to high-cost areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have already developed the tenants' exchange scheme, the national mobility scheme, and the right to exchange in the public rented sector. We also hope to introduce legislation to encourage the supply of more homes for renting in the private sector, but probably not during the lifetime of this Parliament.

The employment transfer scheme of the Manpower Services Commission can also help with rehousing costs in some cases.

Watts Committee

32. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached on the recommendations of the Watts committee on water metering.

Mr. John Patten: I have received the committee's report and intend to publish it shortly.

Local Government Act 1985

36. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the local authority associations on the implementation of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: My noble Friend the Minister of State met representatives of the AMA on 21 October to discuss the implications of the 1985 Act for staff.

43. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and representatives of the metropolitan county councils since the Local Government Act received Royal Assent.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer to the answer I gave today, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam), concerning discussions with the AMA. In addition, my noble Friend the Minister of State has met representatives of the MCC's during visits to most of the metropolitan counties.

Housing Investment Programme

37. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the housing investment programme allocations for 1986-87.

47. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make decisions about the housing investment programme for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocations for local authorities are normally announced before the Christmas recess.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing investment programme allocations made to each London borough and to each metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1985-86 expressed in constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have placed this information in the Library.

Joint Boards

38. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the joint boards on their budget and manpower levels for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: None. These are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Secretary of State for Transport.

Urban Development Grant

39. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost to the public sector so far of urban development grant projects for industrial and commercial development, and what is the estimated number of jobs created by those schemes.

Mr. John Patten: One hundred and twenty one industrial and commercial projects have been approved for urban development grant. They are expected to create over 16,000 permanent jobs for public expenditure of less than £60 million.

Rates Act 1984

40. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received since 25 July from those local authorities designated under the Rates Act 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: Four authorities have formally requested a redetermination of their expenditure level under section 3(4) of the Rates Act 1984. I have also received a number of other representations from designated authorities and the local authority associations.

Scunthorpe (Derelict Land Grants)

44. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the operation of the derelict land grant scheme, the funds devoted thereto, and benefits derived therefrom; and whether any advantages have been derived by Scunthorpe.

Sir George Young: The reclamation of derelict land makes an important contribution to urban renewal by providing sites for development and improving the environment. It also relieves pressure for development in the countryside. Up to 1,300 hectares are reclaimed each year. My right hon. Friend has recently increased the resources available this year for such work by £5½ million to £82 million. Several important schemes are under way or under consideration in Scunthorpe, including the reclamation by Pipe and Rail Ltd. of 36 hectares, the largest private sector DLG scheme ever to have been approved.

Football Ground Improvements

45. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any recent discussions with representatives of Third and Fourth division English Football League clubs about Government financial support for ground improvements.

Mr. Tracey: The issues about financing of safety improvements at Football League grounds — in particular, of divisions 3 and 4—are discussed in my working group with the Football League (which represents all league clubs), the Football Association and other interested bodies.

The most recent meeting of the group was on 16 October.

Radioactive Waste

48. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made with the investigation of the feasibility of the disposal of radioactive waste below the seabed.

Mrs. Rumbold: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the concept of emplacing intermediate-level wastes under the continental shelf, I understand that NIREX has now let two contracts for generic desk studies into the feasibility of systems that may be suitable for this purpose.

Smith Houses

49. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Leicester city council concerning the designation of Smith houses by the local authority under the Housing Defects Act and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Leicester city council wrote to my Department on 2 July and again on 30 August about the designation of Smith houses under section 12 of the Housing Defects Act 1984. The designation was however

legally invalid, and my officials have written to the council explaining why this is so. I have also written to my hon. Friend about this.

Water Supplies

51. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to alter the legal basis for water supply.

Mr. John Patten: We are reviewing some aspects of water supply and sewerage legislation with a view to modernisation and consolidation when the parliamentary timetable allows.

We are also considering whether to privatise some or all water authority functions. A statement will be made in due course.

Widdicombe Committee

52. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the interim report of the Widdicombe committee of inquiry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's response to the Widdicombe inquiry's interim report on local authority publicity was published on 2 October, and a copy placed in the Library.

Beaches (Pollution)

53. **Mr. Gale** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in the last 12 months toward the establishment of further European standard bathing beaches in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: Major schemes to improve the quality of bathing waters at the following resorts were in hand or completed during the last 12 months:

Redcar (Langbaurgh), Seaton Valley, Caister, Margate, Hythe, Hastings, Ryde and Weymouth.

Substantial investment was also carried out to improve the Mersey estuary.

If current expenditure levels continue over the next 15 to 20 years we shall have eliminated most of those unsatisfactory discharges to coastal waters which affect areas of environmental or amenity significance.

Housing Corporation

54. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the corporate plan of the Housing Corporation.

Sir George Young: I refer to the reply my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 13 June 1985, at column 524.

Local Authority Housing

55. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to help local authorities deal with the backlog of repairs to their housing stock, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Repairs to local authority housing will be taken into account in the allocation of resources for housing investment to local authorities. The Department's urban housing renewal unit is ready to offer advice and guidance to local authorities on a variety of imaginative ways in which the problems of run-down estates can be tackled.

57. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings owned by local authorities in England were improved in the years 1980 to 1984, and how this compares with the period 1975 to 1979.

Sir George Young: Public sector improvements completed in 1975 to 1983, together with provisional figures for 1984, were published in table 7.1 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1974-1984". A copy is in the Library. Final figures for 1984 were published in my Department's press notice No. 433 issued on 4 September 1985.

60. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's housing policy in the light of the Royal Institute of British Architects' publication, "Local Authority Housing Repair and Maintenance Needs", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend expects shortly to publish the findings of the Department's own inquiry into the repair and improvement needs of local authority housing. We will be discussing the implications of those findings with the local authority associations and other interested bodies.

Audit Commission

56. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has discussed with the local authority associations the implications for his Department's policy of the annual report of the Audit Commission.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The 1984-85 annual report of the Audit Commission drew attention to the very considerable opportunities for providing better value for money in local authority services. The potential for reducing costs and improving services was discussed with the local authority associations at the meeting of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 23 July 1985. As a result my officials arranged for the controller of audit of the Audit Commission to give a presentation to members of the CCLGF on 21 October.

Housing Defects Act 1984

59. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the extra bids for resources from local authorities to meet their obligations under the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 23 October 1985.

63. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for repurchase have now been made under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities in England have so far reported that 140 dwellings were purchased under the Housing Defects Act between 1 December 1984 and 31 March 1985, and that some 190 dwellings have been repurchased during the first quarter of the current financial

year. I regret that information on the number of applications made for assistance under the Housing Defects Act, including claims for repurchase under section 3(5) of the Act, is not currently available.

Housing Improvement Grants

61. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he received on the Green Paper on improvement grants.

Sir George Young: My Department consulted widely on the Green Paper and by 16 October had received 401 responses.

London Residuary Body

62. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters arising from the abolition of the Greater London council he has discussed with the chairman of the London Residuary Body.

Mrs. Rumbold: Those relevant to the Residuary Body's functions under the Local Government Act 1985.

Group of Eight

64. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Group of Eight to discuss the construction industry.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My predecessor met the Group of Eight on 22 July 1985. I hope to meet the group myself in the near future.

Housing Stress Areas

65. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which areas of housing stress he has visited since 26 July.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Since becoming Secretary of State I have visited areas of housing stress in several towns and cities, and I shall be making further visits.

Local Authorities (EC Assistance)

66. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to increase the amount of European Community assistance to local authority projects.

Mr. Tracey: Local authorities and other public bodies which provide infrastructure for regional development in the assisted areas are given equal opportunity by the Government to apply for assistance from the European regional development fund. It is for the European Commission to decide initially which applications to support.

Royal Parks

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the saving to public funds of the privatisation of services of each of the royal parks.

Mr. Tracey: Catering, boating and deckchair services in the royal parks have been contracted out for over 20 years. In the last 2½ years the management of the Serpentine lido in Hyde park and of Richmond park golf courses and the provision of toilet and playground attendants in the royal parks have also been contracted out. Initial net "one off" costs have amounted to some £177,000. Operating savings to date have amounted to £170,000. The estimated future saving is about £130,000 per annum.

Furans and Dioxins

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any information as to the relative amounts of furans and dioxins produced *(a)* when batches of polychlorinated biphenyls are incinerated in drums and *(b)* by continuous liquid feed of polychlorinated biphenyls to an incinerator.

Mrs. Rumbold: No relative data are available since PCBs are not normally burnt in drums.

Trials have demonstrated that the amount of dibenzofurans and dibenzodioxins emitted as a result of high temperature incineration of PCBs by continuous liquid feed is consistently less than 1 part in 10^{12} (ie one in a million million) in stack gases.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

European Charter of Local Self-Government

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government will now sign the European charter of local self-government which has been adopted by the Council of Europe; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. While we fully support the principles underlying the charter, we remain firmly of the view that its subject matter is not appropriate for an international agreement.

Surplus Urban Land

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 10 July, *Official Report*, column *475*, if he will make a statement on the action that he has taken to require the owners of the 50 sites identified on the land registers to dispose of them; and what action he has taken or contemplates taking under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to bring these sites to the attention of private sector purchasers.

Sir George Young: I am presently considering the representations made to me following the 50 notices issued on 25 June under section 99 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. In the light of those representations, my right hon. Friend will decide whether or not to direct the owners to dispose of their interest in the sites under section 98 of the Act. He will issue his decision shortly.

Inspectors

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the numbers and percentages of the total of his Department's current inspectors who were

recruited from *(a)* central Government, *(b)* local government, *(c)* the diplomatic service, *(d)* the armed services, *(e)* private enterprise and *(f)* other sources.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The following list gives the numbers and percentages of the Department's current salaried inspectors who fall into each of the categories listed:

	Number	*Percentage of total*
(a) central government	37	19
(b) local government	114	58
(c) the diplomatic service	11	6
(d) the armed services	15	8
(e) private enterprise	7	3
(f) other sources	12	6
TOTAL	196	100

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total strength of the salaried inspectorate, excluding management, and *(b)* the total strength of the salaried inspectorate, including management, for the last five years to the latest available date.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total strength of the salaried inspectorate over the last five years, as at 1 October each year is as follows:

	(a) excluding administrative staff and senior management	*(b) including administrative staff and senior management*
1981	201	405
1982	180	372
1983	166	356
1984	168	359
1985	186	393

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the Answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *152*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the range of recognised professional qualifications required of his Department's inspectors to consider planning appeals under the Town and Country Planning Acts and related legislation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The range of recognised professional qualifications required of housing and planning inspectors in the Department of the Environment is as follows:

Corporate membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (any sub-division); registered architects; barristers called to the English or Northern Ireland bars, advocates called to the Scottish bar, or solicitors admitted in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Exceptionally, candidates without a professional qualification can also be considered if they have experience of special value to the planning inspectorate.

Limestone, Sand and Gravel

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the estimated reserves of sand and gravel in England outside marine areas and the anticipated requirements for these minerals in 1990 and 2000.

Mr. Tracey: The estimated permitted reserves of sand and gravel in England totalled 965 million tonnes on 1 January 1982. The demand for sand and gravel in England was forecast in 1981 to be between 62 and 86 million tonnes per annum in 1990. No forecast has yet been made for the year 2000.

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* limestone quarries and *(b)* sand and gravel sites are currently being worked in the United Kingdom; and if he will list the new quarries or sites that have been authorised in the past two years.

Mr. Tracey: There are approximately 360 limestone quarries and 1,180 sand and gravel sites currently being worked in England, Wales and Scotland. Records are not kept centrally of sites granted planning permission in the past two years.

Sulphur Emissions

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes in the volume of United Kingdom sulphur emissions he estimates will take place between 1985 and *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1995.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1984 total United Kingdom emissions of sulphur dioxide were 3·5 million tonnes. The Department of Energy estimates that, depending on the assumptions made, total emissions will be in the range of 3·4 million to 4·2 million tonnes in 1990 and 3·1 million to 4·5 million tonnes in 2000. There are no estimates for 1993 and 1995.

These estimates for 1990 and 2000 have been made on the basis of Department of Energy projections of long-term energy demand, prepared for and submitted to the Sizewell public inquiry in 1982. These projections are, by their very nature, subject to great uncertainty. They include alternative assumptions about the level of world economic activity, international fuel prices and the growth and structure of the United Kingdom economy. They therefore cover a range of scenarios which, in turn, produce a range of emission estimates.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures for the percentage of United Kingdom emissions of sulphur estimated to have been deposited in *(a)* Sweden and *(b)* Norway, in each of the last five years for which figures are available, on the basis of depositions from all sources, and from sources of known origin, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is estimated that in 1980 United Kingdom sulphur emissions gave rise to 6·1 per cent. of total deposition and 8·5 per cent. of deposition from known sources, in Sweden; and to 9·8 per cent. of total deposition and 17·4 per cent. of deposition from known sources, in Norway. It is also estimated that about 2 to 3 per cent. of United Kingdom emissions fell on Sweden and a similar percentage on Norway.

Directly comparable figures for other years are not available but I am obtaining estimates and will write to the hon. Member.

Norfolk Broads

Mr. Ryder asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to bring forward legislation to establish a new authority for the Norfolk Broads.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Garage Sales

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what encouragement is being given to local authorities and development corporations to sell off garages.

Sir George Young: Where a local authority or new town dwelling is being sold to a tenant who has the right to buy, the sale must include any garage let together with or used for the purposes of the dwelling. The Department has made it possible for local authorities and development corporations to sell garages to other categories of purchaser on a voluntary basis, at a discount where appropriate.

Housing Subsidies

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of housing subsidies paid by the Housing Corporation to each housing association in Cumbria for the last month for which stastistics are available.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation finances the development costs of housing association projects within an approved development programme agreed by my right hon. Friend. The value of projects in Cumbria which were approved by the Housing Corporation in September 1985, the latest month for which information is available are as follows:

	£ thousands
Fair rent (new build)	
North Housing Association	791

Mineral Sites

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many planning applications in Greater London for minerals sites in the most recent year for which figures are available of *(a)* over two hectares were dealt with by the Greater London council and *(b)* of less than two hectares were dealt with by the boroughs.

Mr. Tracey: Comprehensive information about minerals planning applications in Greater London is not available but, from the returns made by London boroughs to my Department, 5 minerals planning applications were recorded in the year ended June 30 1985. Site sizes of applications referred to the GLC are not held centrally.

Strategic Planning

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 submitted by the Greater London council before 1 February 1984 are still awaiting written consent.

Mr. Tracey: I assume that the hon. Member means 1 February 1985, in which case two applications submitted before that date are outstanding. In both cases further information requested from the GLC is awaited to enable the applications to receive full and proper consideration.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what strategic planning guidance his Department has issued to the Greater London council since 1976 other than in published circulars.

Mr. Tracey: Through its membership of SERPLAN, the GLC will have received guidance from my right hon. Friend on 7 August 1980 "South East Regional Strategic Guidance", and on 23 March 1984, "M25 and Land Use Planning in the South East".

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the likely administrative costs of the proposed planning system in London in the event of the abolition of the Greater London council; and what are the costs of the present system.

Mr. Tracey: This information is not available. Records are not kept of administration costs at every level of the planning system in London. However, with the abolition of one tier in the system, overall costs are expected to be less than they would otherwise have been for a comparable caseload.

Lea Valley Regional Park

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the present arrangements for financing the Lea Valley regional park; and what arrangements will be made, if the Greater London council is abolished, to continue its funding.

Mr. Tracey: The arrangements for funding the Lea Valley regional park authority are set out in the Lea Valley Regional Park Act 1966. The three contributing councils are the Greater London council and the Essex and Hertfordshire county councils. The intention is for the GLC contribution to be split at abolition between the 32 London boroughs and the City of London by means of a per capita levy.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to ensure that the nature, merits, and impact on life in east London and on strategic planning in Greater London of the proposals to construct a major financial centre of 10 million sq ft on 70 acres of Canary wharf in the enterprise zone on the Isle of Dogs are given some form of statutory public scrutiny prior to the effective decision being taken to proceed with the project.

Sir George Young: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the date when the London Docklands development corporation is expected to give, or has already given, its consent in principle for the creation of a 10 million sq ft financial centre on Canary wharf in the enterprise zone on the Isle of Dogs; what further negative or positive decisions will need to be made and by whom in order for the scheme to proceed; by what dates he expects those decisions will be taken; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The majority of the proposed financial centre on Canary wharf is located within the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone and benefits from planning permission under the EZ scheme. The board of the London

Docklands development corporation did, however, give approval on October 17 to the incorporation in the proposed scheme of buildings more than 120 ft in height and to development within the EZ boundary subzones, subject to approval by LDDC of the materials to be used throughout the proposed development. At the same time the board, in its capacity as landowner, gave approval in principle to the consortium's master plan. The binding contract leasing the land in the corporation's ownership to the consortium is expected to be submitted to the LDCC board for approval in December. An application for planning approval for the part of the development outside the EZ will also need to be made to LDDC as local planning authority in the normal way.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the dates when the London Dockland Development Corporation first provided written information or plans of the proposal of Credit Suisse-First Boston to create a major financial centre on the Isle of Dogs to hon. Members whose constituencies include part of the statutory area of the corporation;

(2) if he will give the dates when the London Docklands Development Corporation gave official notification to the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham and the Greater London council, respectively, of the proposal by Credit Suisse-First Boston to create a major financial centre on the Isle of Dogs; and in what form any such notice was given.

Sir George Young: The LDDC has been in continuing discussion with the London borough of Tower Hamlets about the plans for a major financial centre on Canary wharf within the borough. The Docklands Forum, the local Members of Parliament, the City of London chief officers and the Docklands Business Club, among others, were invited to presentations on the proposals. In addition to its contacts with Tower Hamlets the LDDC has written to the London boroughs of Newham, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich and the GLC informing them of the proposed development and offering to give them presentations.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether, in relation to the proposals for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, he will arrange to call in the proposals for his own consideration;

(2) in relation to the proposals for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, what existing development will be displaced and with what employment consequences.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the proposals for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone would increase the rateable return to be remitted by his Department to the London borough of Tower Hamlets in lieu of normal rate payments by the developer.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 22 October [Vol. 84, c. *129*].

Cultural Festival of India

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether an application for consent has been made by the Greater London council under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 in respect of a contract made by its officers on behalf of the Greater London council with P.N. Structures Limited in respect of £101,200 for works carried out in connection with the Cultural Festival of India's display at the Brent show.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Sports (Drugs)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will have discussions with sporting authorities about the use of drugs, including beta-blockers, by sportsmen and women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I strongly condemn the use of drugs in sport. Action to combat this is vigorously and positively led by the Sports Council, and I fully support its actions. In March 1984 the council adopted a resolution obliging all sports to introduce random checks. In March 1985 the council decided to apply severe sanctions to governing bodies of sport who did not introduce effective anti-doping measures. The council continue to fund research into methods of detection for new drugs which unfairly aid performance.

The Government and the Sports Council have also taken firm action in the international context. In May 1984 the Government supported the adoption of a European anti-doping charter; and more recently the Sports Council announced the formation of an international working party, chaired by the United Kingdom, to study ways and means for the promotion and implementation of effective anti-doping measures.

Portsdown Park Housing Estate

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what public funds are available to Portsmouth city council with respect to the refurbishment of the Portsdown Park housing estate.

Sir George Young: That will depend on the type of scheme which the council decides upon for refurbishing the estate. As I have told the council, my Department's urban housing renewal unit can provide local authorities with detailed advice and assistance on tackling the problems of their rundown estates, and it may be able to help them to find the resources necessary, either in the public or private sectors, or both.

London Lesbian and Gay Centre

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act for the London Lesbian and Gay Centre was refused; and when a reply will be sent to the Greater London council's appeal against this decision.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave on 3 May to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) [Vol. 78, c. *257*]. The Department replied on 20 August 1985 to the GLC's request that my right hon. Friend reconsider his decision.

Women's Peace Bus

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act for the Women's Peace Bus was refused.

Mr. Tracey: Consent to the GLC's proposed grant of £41,363 to the Women's Peace Bus Co-operative was refused because my right hon. Friend was not satisfied that the proposed expenditure by the council would be either expedient or in the interests of Greater London or any part of it or all or any of its inhabitants.

Elgin and Walterton Estates

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Westminster city council has sought his consent for the disposal of the whole or any part of the Elgin and Walterton estates.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Thoroughbred Breeding Establishments

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the amount of rateable income derived by local authorities on a year-by-year basis from the date of inception of the rating of thoroughbred breeding establishments.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not held centrally. However, the total rateable value of horse breeding establishments assessed by valuation officers was of the order of £600,000 at March 1985. Applying the average general rate poundage for shire areas in England in 1984-85 of £1·69 in the pound suggests a potential rate income from these establishments of about £1 million for that year.

"Spare Rib"

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why consent for *Spare Rib* under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 was refused.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend was not satisfied that there was any justification for an organisation whose primary purpose is to publish a mass circulation popular magazine to be funded by ratepayers.

Local Authorities (Discrimination)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer of 19 November 1984, *Official Report*, column 3, he will make a further statement on any proposals that he is considering to prevent local authorities from discriminating against private companies for reasons which have nothing to do with the quality of their work.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, Thursday 24 October 1985, c. *252*]: The Government remain very concerned about the misuse of contractual powers by a few local authorities for political purposes. The hon. Member will recall that the Government have given commitments to legislate on this issue but analysis of the recent decision of the House of Lords in the case of Wheeler and Others v. Leicester City Council has led us to reconsider whether such legislation is necessary. Although that case was concerned with conditions imposed by a local authority in pursuance of a specific statutory responsibility, the decision fortifies the view that authorities which discriminate against firms on the basis of irrelevant political considerations do so unlawfully. The Government appreciate the practical difficulties facing a firm wishing to assert its legal rights in this area, but any new legislation would still require action to be taken in the courts by or on behalf of individual companies. It would seem that the law as it stands gives sufficient scope for such action.

SCOTLAND

Farm Animal Health

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to seek to ascertain the subsequent health of cows sold in 1983 from two farms near Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, the names of which are being supplied to him.

Mr. John MacKay: Following allegations about stock purchased from a dispersal sale at Househill farm, Larbert, in April 1983 visits were made to 18 farms by members of the State Veterinary Service. Some animal health problems typical of those affecting dairy cattle were encountered amongst the purchased animals but the majority were found to be in good health. I am not aware of similar allegations concerning Netherwood farm.

Animal Medicines

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the stringency of tests on medicines for animal consumption.

Mr. Younger: Veterinary medicines as well as human ones must be licensed under the Medicines Act 1968. Licences are granted only after a thorough evaluation of data relating to the safety, quality and efficacy of the product. The assessment covers the safety of consumers of produce from treated animals as well as that of the animals themselves. In licensing the products Ministers are advised by a statutory committee of independent experts in animal and human health, the Veterinary Products Committee. Amongst other things the product licence specifies any necessary recommendations for the safe use of the product, such as the withdrawal period to be observed before produce from a treated animal is used for human consumption.

Veterinary Laboratory, Lasswade

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has made a study of the effects of the proposed closure of the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade on agriculture in the south of Scotland;

(2) what representations he has received about the proposed closure of the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade.

Mr. Younger: In announcing his decision to close the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whose Department is responsible for the services currently provided by the laboratory, has made it clear that essential diagnostic services needed in Scotland will continue to be

provided for the benefit of Scottish agriculture. The most appropriate means of doing so are under active consideration.

I have received a number of representations about the proposed closure from parliamentary colleagues, representatives of the farming and poultry industries and members of the veterinary profession.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the net cost of policing the mining dispute for each police authority in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is set out in the following table:

(£ thousand)

Police authority area	*Estimated expenditure*	*Amount of police grant and special grant payable*	*Estimated net cost to police authorities*
Central	565	327	238
Dumfries and Galloway	Nil	Nil	Nil
Fife	759	457	302
Grampian	Nil	Nil	Nil
Lothian and Borders	1,534	790	744
Northern	Nil	Nil	Nil
Strathclyde	2,128	1,064	1,064
Tayside	66	33	33
Total	5,052	2,671	2,381

Smallholdings

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many agricultural smallholdings were leased to tenant farmers by his Department in each district and islands area in May 1979 and in October 1985, respectively.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of agricultural smallholdings (excluding crofts) leased to tenant farmers by the Secretary of State's Department are set out in the table below. The information is not readily available by district and island areas.

County	*1 May 1979*	*1 October 1985*
Aberdeen	45	9
Angus	49	7
Argyll	17	8
Ayr	103	15
Berwick	71	18
Caithness	10	2
Dumfries	79	14
Dumbarton	13	1
East Lothian	96	13
Fife	32	1
Inverness	11	4
Kincardine	29	3
Kirkcudbright	40	3
Lanark	67	5
Midlothian	68	12
Moray	10	—
Orkney	1	—
Peebles	13	—
Perth	69	5
Renfrew	35	7
Ross and Cromarty	20	—
Roxburgh	3	2
Stirling	56	7
Sutherland	2	1
West Lothian	87	11
Wigtown	39	9
	1,065	157

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will arrange for a thorough survey and analysis of cattle morbidity and mortality on dairy farms participating in the Scottish Milk Marketing Board's milk recording scheme within 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, from 1975 to 1985, and publish the results in a form accessible and intelligible to the non-scientific general public;

(2) if he will take steps to prepare a detailed analysis of the persistent and unusual symptoms of ill-health in farm animals reported in central Scotland for the years 1980 to 1985, inclusive, and to publish the data in detail and also in a summary intelligible and accessible to the non-scientific general public;

(3) if he will make arrangements for further cartographic analysis of the unexplained phenomena affecting the health of farm animals within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, for the years 1982 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. John MacKay: The incidence of animal morbidity in the Bonnybridge-Denny area was fully considered as part of the Leniham review. After taking into account the outcome of extensive investigations carried out by the veterinary investigation services of the East and West of Scotland agricultural colleges and by the Glasgow University veterinary school, the review concluded that there was nothing unusual about the health of animals generally in that area nor was there any unusual factor operating in the area causing unusual morbidity among farm animals. In the light of this conclusion I see no reason for undertaking further surveys and analysis as proposed.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers have been interviewed personally and their evidence recorded in writing by his officials concerning animal problems of farm animal health within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, for the years 1974 to 1985, inclusive; and if he will publish the available data in detail and also in a summary form intelligible and accessible to the non-scientific general public.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available. As explained in my reply of 23 October [Vol. 83, c. *175*] problems of animal health would normally be a matter for the farmer and his veterinary surgeon, not my officials.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the Scottish Milk Marketing Board and to the relevant public health authorities on the subject of regular tests for the presence of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls in random samples of bottled milk sold direct from farms to consumers within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire; and whether reports of such tests will be published.

Mr. John MacKay: None. Public health sampling and testing of milk is the responsibility of local authorities. Requests for information on such testing should accordingly be directed at the appropriate district council.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to require that milk from farms where there have been unexplained and unusual animal health problems is segregated from milk supplied by farms where no such problems have been reported; and if he will make provision for compensation for farmers affected by such action.

Mr. John MacKay: No. Adequate powers are already available to local authorities under both the Milk and Dairies (Scotland) Act 1914 and the Food and Drugs (Scotland) Act 1956 to stop milk supplies intended for human consumption if they consider that the milk is unfit. These powers include provisions regarding compensation.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what he is doing to commission statistically significant scientific testing for traces of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls, at parts per trillion, of samples of soil, vegetation and animal fat from farms within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, on the basis of samples taken as near as possible to each kilometre grid square intersection on the 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey.

Mr. John MacKay: Samples of soil and animal fat have been analysed at the parts per trillion level for dioxins and furans and at the parts per billion level for polychlorinated biphenyls. No useful purpose would be served in sampling in the way suggested.

Concerning current research into the levels of dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls in soil I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question about current research on 21 October [Vol. 84, c. 98].

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details available to him of the operation of the Re-Chem International incinerator at Roughmute, Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, on the following dates: 5 September 1983, 1 to 30 April, 18, 24, 28, 29 and 31 May 1984, 1, 20 and 27 June 1984, 10 and 11 July 1984, and 7, 10, 15 and 31 August 1984; and whether he is satisfied that the reactor was properly operated on those dates.

Mr. Ancram: The Secretary of State does not have this information. Details of operating conditions during the periods in question are held by the company.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the standard of cartographic analysis of the data examined by the Lenihan report on morbidity in the Denny and Bonnybridge areas; and whether any use was made of the technique of computer mapping in the analysis.

Mr. John MacKay: The findings of the report of the independent review group chaired by Professor Lenihan have been accepted by the Government. The group's methodology was set out in its report. I do not consider it appropriate to comment on its use of particular analytical techniques.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his analysis of the information he has on the health of farmers, farmworkers and their families living within 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, for the period 1974 to 1985 inclusive; and if he will indicate the professional advice he sought in the analysis.

Mr. John MacKay: I have no specific information on the health of farmers, farm workers and their families living within 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire for the period 1974 to 1985 inclusive.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had any discussions about compensation to children born with eye and other bodily defects, as a result of the poisoning of their mothers and fathers by the emission and dispersal of toxic compounds from installations in central Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: No. Such discussions would be inappropriate. There is no evidence that the eye and other bodily defects referred to in the question are linked to the emission and dispersal of toxic compounds from installations in central Scotland.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the recommendations in the Lenihan report about morbidity in the Denny and Bonnybridge areas about the best geographical area of study.

Mr. John MacKay: I have accepted the recommendations of the Lenihan report, and am pursuing those which call for further action.

Agricultural Research and Development

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to publish a paper on the future structure for agricultural research and development work.

Mr. John MacKay: It is desirable that publication of the paper setting out the future strategy and structure for agricultural research and development work in Scotland should follow submission by the priorities board for research and development in agriculture and food to agriculture Ministers and the chairman of the Agriculture and Food Research Council of its recommendations on priorities and budget allocations for the United Kingdom. It is hoped the Department's paper can be published around the beginning of December.

List D Schools

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of list D schools in Scotland in the light of representations made to him by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to a question tabled by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on 6 June [Vol. 80, c. 257].

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities subsequently asked that present arrangements for supporting the schools should be continued for a further year until 31 March 1987. My right hon. Friend concluded, however, that it would be best to follow the timetable set out in his statement on 6 June. Direct grants to the schools will therefore be withdrawn from 31 March 1986. Rate support grant will be increased to reflect the consequential increase in expenditure falling on local authorities.

I understand that authorities are considering their future requirement for places and the arrangements for providing financial support to the schools from 1 April next.

Discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities concerning the amount of the additional rate support grant to be paid in 1986-87 are nearing completion.

Duich Moss (Drainage Ditch)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that a drainage ditch dug on behalf of a Scottish firm of distillers upon Duich Moss site of special scientific interest, Strathclyde, extending outside phase 1 of the permitted development area, fulfils the conditions contained in letters dated 18 July and 18 December 1984 from his Department which were sent to the interested parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Following the discovery that a drainage ditch appeared to have been excavated in an area of Duich Moss outside phase 1 of the permitted development area, my Department wrote to Scottish Malt Distillers Ltd. to seek their comments on this apparent breach of conditions laid down by my right hon. Friend in granting the company planning permission for the extraction of peat from the moss. The company's comments have recently been received and Argyll and Bute district council, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Greenland White-Fronted Goose Study have been invited to offer views on the points raised by the company to assist my right hon. Friend in his further consideration of the matter. Replies from these bodies are awaited.

Locate in Scotland

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of jobs created by Locate in Scotland in each of the last five years, giving a breakdown between those created in new towns and those created elsewhere and a breakdown between main industrial classifications.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The employment effect of planned inward investment secured for Scotland in new towns and elsewhere since Locate in Scotland was set up in March 1981 is described in table A.

The breakdown of these jobs between the main industrial classifications is as indicated in table B.

Table A
Breakdown of jobs created or safeguarded by LIS
New towns and elsewhere

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*Total*
New Towns					
New	2,491	761	2,116	3,580	8,948
Safeguarded	—	—	500	187	687
Elsewhere					
New	1,817	1,906	1,325	4,952	10,000
Safeguarded	2,396	408	2,958	1,398	7,160
Total					
New	4,308	2,667	3,441	8,532	18,948
Safeguarded	2,396	408	3,458	1,585	7,847

Table B

Industry sector	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*Total*
Chemicals					
New	40	25	114	61	240
Safeguarded	—	90	200	17	307
Mechanical engineering					
New	866	266	1,118	1,473	3,723
Safeguarded	—	—	500	850	1,350
Electrical engineering					
New	134	—	236	58	428
Safeguarded	1,717	—	56	—	1,773
Electronics					
New	2,355	1,365	920	5,619	10,259
Safeguarded	600	289	1,332	531	2,752
Metals					
New	30	161	—	—	191
Safeguarded	—	29	—	—	29
Clothing					
New	271	150	272	185	878
Safeguarded	—	—	—	—	—
Service					
New	—	238	51	431	720
Safeguarded	—	—	—	—	—
Other					
New	612	462	730	705	2,509
Safeguarded	79	—	1,370	187	1,636

Fish Processing (Aid)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the amount of European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund and national aid granted to fish processing projects in Scotland in the years 1979 to 1984 and the figures for the latest periods in 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The amount of aid granted to fish processing projects in Scotland from the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund in recent years together with the national aid paid to these projects is shown below. (Financial details on projects granted national aid only are not readily identifiable.)

Year	*EAGGF funding* £	*National funding* £
1979	421,336	142,127
1980	487,266	303,100
1981	239,167	114,862
1982	360,123	441,068
1983	483,017	413,431
1984	598,011	205,287
1985 (to 30 June)	469,986	113,891

Health Expenditure

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the outturn revenue spending of each health board from 1981-82 to 1984-85, and the budgeted revenue spending for 1985-86.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is given below; this excludes expenditure on the family practitioner services.

Hospital and community health services gross current expenditure

Health board	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85** £	*1985-86†* £
Argyll and Clyde	77,189,861	82,276,841	86,199,304	90,266,700	98,106,000
Ayrshire and Arran	48,793,865	55,619,462	60,567,669	65,615,678	69,845,000
Borders	15,018,215	16,608,296	17,589,030	18,957,545	19,963,000
Dumfries and Galloway	26,653,044	28,935,625	31,216,848	33,578,483	35,097,000
Fife	49,406,884	53,218,928	57,620,935	61,822,597	65,532,000
Forth Valley	48,322,009	52,360,804	55,940,845	58,636,346	63,597,000
Grampian	91,717,974	99,017,992	105,833,900	113,077,074	119,925,000
Greater Glasgow	293,266, 611	307,845,521	327,543,520	347,682,550	359,973,000
Highland	39,631,940	41,743,009	43,911,847	47,396,752	50,363,000
Lanarkshire	85,383,979	92,235,366	97,773,057	105,564,392	111,043,000
Lothian	174,751,264	188,224,969	195,440,676	209,343,902	217,861,000
Orkney	2,735,359	2,963,551	3,196,406	3,418,888	3,637,000
Shetland	3,402,538	3,690,581	4,006,086	4,424,894	4,557,000
Tayside	105,081,705	110,614,980	115,686,395	123,322,141	126,728,000
Western Isles	4,978,198	5,704,355	5,866,838	6,556,814	6,953,000
Total	1,066,333,446	1,139,060,260	1,208,393,356	1,289,664,736‡§	11,353,180,000

* Provisional.
† Estimated.
‡ Excludes £6·7 million as yet unallocated.

Health Boards (Employees)

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the numbers employed by each health board from 1981-82 to 1984-85 and the expected numbers employed in 1985-86 for each of the following categories: *(a)* medical nursing, *(b)* paramedical and technical, *(c)* administrative and clerical, *(d)* ancillary and *(e)* other.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is usually published as staff in post (by whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September and for the years 1981 to 1984 is shown in table 1 below. No projected figures are held but table 2 shows the provisional figures at 31 March 1985.

TABLE 1

NHS Manpower—Scotland
1981

WTE

	Medical and dental	*Nursing and midwifery*	*Para-medical*	*Technical*	*Admin and clerical*	*Ancillary*	*Others*	*Total*
Argyll and Clyde	352·6	4,525·3	226·7	221·9	1,013·5	1,992·1	271·3	8,603·4
Ayrshire and Arran	224·4	2,854·2	166·5	154·6	563·0	1,247·0	210·0	5,419·7
Borders	60·0	939·9	47·4	35·6	137·3	336·0	53·0	1,609·2
Dumfries and Galloway	130·3	1,751·2	89·6	83·5	273·6	689·7	127·1	3,145·0
Fife	238·3	3,039·7	162·1	148·4	528·6	1,343·4	137·0	5,597·5
Forth Valley	209·8	3,097·0	135·8	132·5	482·0	1,316·0	210·3	5,583·4
Grampian	546·8	5,552·7	270·2	176·2	1,141·9	2,354·1	315·1	10,357·0
Greater Glasgow	1,929·7	15,880·5	969·2	1,626·4	3,526·9	7,212·1	1,319·9	32,464·7
Highland	218·1	2,310·8	103·3	140·8	416·5	938·0	148·0	4,275·5
Lanarkshire	418·9	5,139·7	252·9	319·9	915·3	2,263·3	316·6	9,626·6
Lothian	1,175·0	9,220·8	685·8	788·4	2,035·1	3,992·9	623·5	18,521·5
Orkney	9·4	183·9	5·3	5·6	21·7	68·1	3·0	297·0
Shetland	11·0	181·9	12·7	12·0	29·9	68·1	11·1	326·7
Tayside	635·0	6,023·7	357·6	431·5	1,205·7	2,868·2	443·3	1,196·0
Western Isles	18·5	254·6	15·5	12·1	37·2	115·0	25·5	478·4
Scotland*	6,231·3	61,125·5	3,501·6	4,546·8	13,628·8	27,126·2	6,307·7	122,467·9

1982

	Medical and dental	*Nursing and midwifery*	*Para-medical*	*Technical*	*Admin and clerical*	*Ancillary*	*Others*	*Total*
Argyll and Clyde	354·4	4,514·2	238·6	219·7	1,036·5	1,977·7	268·2	8,609·3
Ayrshire and Arran	242·5	2,977·3	189·5	166·0	638·6	1,404·2	224·7	5,842·8
Borders	59·4	990·2	48·2	36·3	146·3	338·0	59·0	1,677·1
Dumfries and Galloway	129·6	1,792·0	100·9	83·7	288·8	691·1	124·0	3,210·1
Fife	241·8	3,188·4	186·4	150·5	534·7	1,348·3	142·0	5,792·1
Forth Valley	224·4	3,170·7	142.3	141·9	489·9	1,316·7	218·2	5,704·1
Grampian	535·1	5,608·4	279·6	175·3	1,147·4	2,348·8	309·5	10,404·1
Greater Glasgow	1,953·0	15,856·1	987·1	1,613·2	3,558·8	7,104·9	1,343·4	32,416·5
Highland	208·4	2,243·9	114·5	151·7	425·8	918·7	148·8	4,211·8

	Medical and dental	Nursing and midwifery	Para-medical	Technical	Admin and clerical	Ancillary	Others	Total
Lanarkshire	434·5	5,158·1	253·6	325·4	922·7	2,266·6	312·6	9,673·5
Lothian	1,212·9	9,582·2	716·0	[illegible]	2,083·8	4,067·8	643·5	19,108·7
Orkney	10·0	191·9	6·3	[illegible]	21·7	64·8	3·0	304·3
Shetland	12·0	184·4	12·9	[illegible]	29·9	68·5	11·2	332·3
Tayside	615·9	6,084·5	371·6	[illegible]	1,214·5	2,830·9	446·1	11,998·0
Western Isles	18·7	267·1	18·2	12·2	38·0	114·7	24·3	493·2
Scotland*	6,311·7	61,979·2	3,666·7	4,584·1	13,880·4	27,194·0	6,394·5	124,010·6

1983

	Medical and Dental	Nursing and Midwifery	Para-medical	Technical	Admin and clerical	Ancillary	Others	Total
Argyll and Clyde	362·5	4,574·7	242·9	211·6	1,045·4	1,922·2	268·3	8,627·6
Ayrshire and Arran	253·1	3,281·8	201·8	168·1	646·5	1,416·5	240·7	6,208·5
Borders	57·5	1,005·1	52·1	37·9	156·0	352·6	61·0	1,722·2
Dumfries and Galloway	127·3	1,848·2	106·8	82·8	297·3	681·7	128	3,272·1
Fife	244·9	3,253·9	204·5	147·6	569·2	1,386·8	147·7	5,954·6
Forth Valley	223·8	3,253·7	146·8	147·5	500·4	1,290·2	237·8	5,800·2
Grampian	528·1	5,666·6	289·5	170·9	1,142·1	2,342·5	303·0	10,442·7
Greater Glasgow	1,977·7	15,449·7	1,012·5	1,671·3	3,615·7	6,822·6	1,344·0	31,893·5
Highland	205·5	2,268·8	118·5	149·8	422·7	902·1	155·8	4,223·2
Lanarkshire	457·2	5,316·6	274·3	320·5	945·0	2,249·4	325·6	9,888·6
Lothian	1,210·3	9,706·2	745·8	818·0	2,113·5	3,984·0	659·4	19,237·2
Orkney	8·6	193·7	6·7	6·5	24·7	65·3	4·0	309·5
Shetland	12·1	198·8	15·5	14·4	30·2	77·3	11·2	359·5
Tayside	607·8	5,933·5	384·3	426·9	1,208·5	2,775·5	435·1	11,771·6
Western Isles	20·2	264·2	20·0	14·3	41·2	112·4	24·0	496·3
Scotland	6,350·9	62,395·5	3,823·0	4,643·6	14,088·0	26,716·8	6,473·5	124,491·3

1984

	Medical and dental	Nursing and midwifery	Para-medical	Technical	Admin and clerical	Ancillary	Others	Total
Argyll and Clyde	342·9	4,548·3	239·5	213·1	1,059·6	1,879·3	257·3	8,540·0
Ayrshire and Arran	264·5	3,162·6	215·1	175·6	637·7	1,355·6	239·8	6,050·9
Borders	57·1	1,024·7	56·9	39·4	163·6	336·7	60·0	1,738·4
Dumfries and Galloway	127·9	1,816·0	105·3	85·0	295·1	667·4	126·0	3,222·7
Fife	246·9	3,261·1	212·4	152·8	576·0	1,372·7	145·2	5,967·1
Forth Valley	219·6	3,235·6	153·6	149·4	510·3	1,245·0	236·8	5,750·3
Grampian	545·0	5,741·7	296·0	174·3	1,131·3	2,264·0	305·9	10,458·2
Greater Glasgow	1,975·2	15,394·8	1,061·7	1,683·6	3,637·9	6,664·5	1,347·4	31,765·1
Highland	206·7	2,256·5	122·6	152·5	429·3	883·7	158·4	4,209·7
Lanarkshire	470·1	5,241·3	287·0	333·7	952·0	2,170·7	326·6	9,781·4
Lothian	1,219·2	9,518·8	740·8	807·1	2,036·4	3,880·5	660·2	18,843·0
Orkney	8·5	190·6	7·3	6·2	24·7	65·6	5·0	307·9
Shetland	12·2	208·2	16·7	15·4	33·3	72·7	11·2	369·7
Tayside	614·6	5,961·8	376·2	425·2	1,188·3	2,648·3	445·1	11,659·5
Western Isles	18·2	281·1	21·5	12·5	43·0	118·8	25·0	520·1
Scotland*	6,387·7	62,027·4	3,913·6	4,699·8	14,052·8	25,934·9	6,480·6	123,496·8

* Staff employed in Common Services Agency included in Scotland total.

TABLE 2

NHS Manpower—Scotland
WTE

1985 (March)

	Medical and dental	Nursing and midwifery	Para-medical	Technical	Admin and clerical	Ancillary	Others	Total
Argyll and Clyde	343·1	4,591·7	245·1	220·7	1,080·7	1,851·5	281·3	8,594·1
Ayrshire and Arran	264·5	3,178·6	218·3	179·6	639·3	1,340·8	239·3	6,060·4
Borders	57·1	1,026·0	57·6	40·8	167·2	341·1	61·1	1,750·9
Dumfries and Galloway	127·9	1,847·5	98·6	84·4	323·6	670·8	130·8	3,283·6
Fife	246·9	3,309·8	219·2	152·2	593·4	1,356·3	156·7	6,033·5
Forth Valley	219·6	3,240·1	157·5	153·1	513·4	1,208·5	231·8	5,724·0
Grampian	545·0	5,762·2	297·1	177·9	1,150·0	2,248·6	305·4	10,486·2
Greater Glasgow	1,975·2	15,476·3	1,066·7	1,646·3	3,646·2	6,581·3	1,316·0	31,708·0
Highlands	206·7	2,252·9	117·7	153·5	436·0	885·9	160·5	4,213·2
Lanarkshire	470·1	5,228·6	287·2	373·2	967·4	2,091·0	324·6	9,742·1
Lothian	1,219·2	9,607·9	728·7	806·2	2,060·7	3,833·9	655·9	18,914·5
Orkney	8·5	186·6	8·6	6·2	23·2	64·1	5·0	302·2

	Medical and dental	Nursing and midwifery	Para-medical	Technical	Admin and clerical	Ancillary	Others	Total
Shetland	12·2	200·5	10·1	15·4	33·7	72·8	11·2	367·9
Tayside	614·6	5,979·7	376·5	433·3	1,200·6	2,607·9	440·6	11,653·2
Western Isles	10·2	282·7	22·8	11·4	43·0	121·7	26·0	525·8
Scotland*	6,387·7	62,357·1	3,917·7	4,729·1	14,243·1	25,616·3	6,467·3	123,718·3

* Staff employed in Common Services Agency included in Scotland total

Strathclyde Structure Plan Review

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received regarding the Campsie and Baldernoch local plan within the framework of the Strathclyde structure plan review; from which individuals or organisations the representations were received; whether he made any modifications to the local plan as a result of any of those representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In addition to representations from the hon. Member and my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) my right hon. Friend has received representations from Strathclyde regional council, Strathkelvin district council, two community councils and 80 letters from individuals or groups of individuals. As I explained when I wrote to the hon. Member on 11 September, further action on the local plan will depend upon my right hon. Friend's further consideration of the Strathclyde structure plan second review and alteration.

GEC Telecommunications Ltd. (Redundancies)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the employment consequences of the intention of GEC Telecommunications Ltd. to make 310 of its Kirkcaldy work force redundant.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Were 310 persons to be made redundant, and were they all to claim unemployment benefit in the Kirkcaldy travel-to-work area, it is estimated that the direct short-run effect would be to increase the unemployment rate in the Kirkcaldy TTWA by around one-half of one percentage point.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the longest time, as of 1 October 1985, that any person had been held in custody awaiting trial.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, approximately 18 months.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (Table 2.4 of the latest issue for 1984 Cmnd. 9622).

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average length of time spent on remand for those who were subsequently acquitted or not proceeded against during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively, in England and Wales;

(2) how many persons who were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded against spent *(a)* nought to three months on remand, *(b)* three to six months on remand, *(c)* six to nine months on remand, *(d)* nine to 12 months on remand and *(e)* over 12 months on remand in respect of those first remanded during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the weekly cost of keeping a prisoner in custody in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively, in a remand institution in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The average weekly cost in recent years of keeping a person in custody in a local prison or remand centre in England and Wales is shown in the following table. Financial information for 1984-85 is not yet available.

Average weekly cost per inmate of imprisonment in a local prison or remand centre.

Financial year	Average weekly cost £
1979-80	122
1980-81	168
1981-82	181
1982-83	200
1983-84	*216

* The figure for 1983-84 was derived from the Prison Department costing system and is not strictly comparable with figures for earlier years. A full explanation of the different bases of calculation was given in the Prison Department Financial Report 1983-84.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce financial compensation for those prisoners who were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded against in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Immigration Checks

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers detected at all United Kingdom airports in the categories of illegal immigrant and criminals for 1983 and 1984, through checks made by immigration officials.

Mr. Waddington: Information is not available in the form requested. However, the total numbers of passengers

refused leave to enter the United Kingdom are published annually by Nationality in "Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom" (Table 1 of Cmnd. 9544 for the 1984 figures and 9246 for 1983).

Crime-Police Ratio

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidences of crime were reported per number of policemen employed in the last year for which figures are available in *(a)* the West Midlands county, *(b)* Warwickshire and *(c)* West Mercia.

Mr. Mellor: The number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in each police force area in England and Wales is published annually in "Crime Statistics, England and Wales" (Table 2.5 of the volume for 1984, Cmnd. 9621). Statistics of police strength at 31 December in each police force area are published annually in the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (appendix 7 of the 1984 report, HC469).

Metropolitan Police (Firearms)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated expenditure for 1985-86 by the Metropolitan police on firearms and related equipment; and how much of this sum is due to be spent in each of the following categories: *(a)* revolvers, *(b)* automatic handguns, *(c)* rifles, *(d)* shotguns, *(e)* semi-automatic rifles, *(f)* fully automatic rifles, *(g)* fully automatic weapons and *(h)* other firearms.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The sum of £243,000 was allocated in the Metropolitan police estimates for 1985-86 for firearms and related equipment; the bulk of this was for ammunition, primers and propellent powders, holsters, body armour and electronic target systems. Some £15,000 was set aside for the purchase of new firearms, comprising revolvers and shotguns to replace worn out training models, some additional rifles and any weapons that may be required for evaluation.

Police (Assaults)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state for each year since 1979 the number of officers of the metropolitan police who were assaulted in the course of duty where any of the following charges were laid against the assailant and also state the number of such charges in each category: *(a)* actual bodily harm, *(b)* grievous bodily harm, *(c)* wounding with intent, *(d)* manslaughter and *(e)* murder.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that information about charges brought against people who assaulted Metropolitan police officers on duty is not readily available except in relation to offences of homicide. That information is given in the following table.

Offences currently recorded as homicide where the victim was a Metropolitan police officer on duty

	Number of offences	*Charges*
1979	—	—
1980	1	Conviction for murder
1981	—	—
1982	—	—
1983	3	None
1984	1	None
1985*	2	3 charged with murder 4 charged with murder

* Provisional; as at 29 October

Brixton Prison

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of the female prisoners in Brixton prison who have been subject to strip searches; for what offence each is imprisoned; how many times these strip searches have taken place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Strip searching is a routine security measure for the detection of small items of contraband, in particular weapons and drugs, which can be concealed easily about the person and cannot be detected by other methods of searching. The three female prisoners on remand at Brixton prison have been strip searched in accordance with standard practice before and after court appearances, after visits, at the time of cell changes and during wing and cell searches.

Silentnight Dispute, Yorkshire

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constables concerned into the police action in relation to the Silentnight dispute at Sutton in Yorkshire.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of North Yorkshire that there has been an industrial dispute at the Silentnight factory at Sutton-in-Craven since April. The factory has been picketed on most days. On 25 October, 50-60 pickets were present, but on all other occasions the number has not exceeded 20. The chief constable informs me that during the dispute his officers have made 13 arrests and seven people have been reported for summons. He has received one complaint against the police.

Prisoners (Petitions)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoners' petitions to him led to the granting of prisoners' requests in the most recent convenient period.

Mr. Mellor: No record is kept of the total number of petitions and the proportion granted.

Metropolitan Police

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his statement of 21 October, *Official Report*, column 31, that the reorganisation of the Metropolitan police is expected to release 200 officers for operational duties, if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the approximate number of Metropolitan police officers currently assigned or expected to be assigned in the near future to the following duties: custody officers and local consultation liaison committees as required by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, diplomatic protection squads and other personal protection, Special Branch and support

for immigration and customs service activities at Heathrow airport and elsewhere; and if he will publish the information in tabular form.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and by bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Scarman Report

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the recommendations and *(b)* the suggestions contained in the Scarman report, indicating in each case what action has been taken in response.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We shall place a paper in the Library as soon as possible.

Riots

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list those riots which have occurred since 1979;

(2) what is the number of police officers, civilians and others injured in each riot since 1979;

(3) what is his estimate of the number of buildings *(a)* destroyed and *(b)* damaged in each riot since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following is the readily available information in respect of the major urban disturbances in 1980, 1981 and 1985:

	Police officers injured	*Civilians injured**	*Others injured†*	*Buildings destroyed*	*Buildings damaged*
1980					
St. Paul's, Bristol	21	10	0	11	20
1981					
Brixton (April)	409	49	‡	‖	‖
Brixton (July)	40	‡	‡	‡	‡
Southall	105	‡	‡	‡	‡
Merseyside (including Toxteth)	781	‡	‡	‡	‡
Greater Manchester (including Moss Side)	32	‡	‡	‡	‡
1985					
Handsworth	79	37	8	17	66
Brixton	93	31	0	0	114
Toxteth	36	27	0	0	3
Tottenham	163	17	1	1	16

*As reported to the police
†All those recorded in this column were firemen
‡Information not readily available
‖145 premises were damaged, some to destruction, on 11 April

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from each chief constable as to all those incidents in 1985 in which petrol bombs were thrown at the police; and if he will indicate, in each case, the location of that disturbance, the apparent causes of it, the number of petrol bombs thrown, the injuries to police officers and civilians that were sustained, the arrests that were made and the charges that have been preferred.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Petrol bombs were thrown at police officers during the recent disturbances in Birmingham, Brixton, Peckham, Toxteth, Tottenham and Leicester but information relating to numbers, and injuries caused, is not available. Details of arrests and charges, and of other instances in which petrol bombs have been thrown in 1985, are not collated centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what factors and causes he attributes the recent riots in British cities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Hostility to the police, criminal opportunism and a general alienation from authority in areas with special social problems were among the factors contributing to the recent disorders.

James Kay

Sir Ian Percival asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his reasons for recalling a restricted patient, James Kay (Lang), and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: James Kay, formerly known as James Lang, was conditionally discharged on 9 April 1985 from Park Lane hospital, Liverpool, where he was detained as a restricted patient following his conviction in 1971 for manslaughter of a young girl. His discharge was in accordance with a direction given on 19 March by a mental health review tribunal. My right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary and I took a very serious view of Mr. Kay's case, and opposed his discharge on the grounds that it would constitute an unacceptable risk to public safety.

On 23 October 1985 Mr. Kay was charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm and a further charge of unlawful wounding was brought on 28 October. Both charges relate to attacks on young women. He is now remanded in custody at HMRC Risley. On 23 October my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary issued a warrant of

recall under section 42 of the Mental Health Act 1983. The effect of this is that, if Mr. Kay were not detained in custody pending trial, he would be returned to hospital.

Ashad Miah

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the immigration authorities did not notify the sponsor of Mr. Ashad Miah TN3/RLE/6261/85 of his place of detention, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Mohd Ashad Miah was detained at Harmondsworth from 15 October until 24 October, when he was transferred to Ashford remand centre. I understand that a relative of Mr. Miah was aware of his detention in Harmondsworth. On transfer to Ashford remand centre, Mr. Miah had the usual access to a telephone there, and made a call.

Deer

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the number of reported incidents of the illegal clipping of deer antlers for their velvet.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not collected centrally. We are not aware that there have been any prosecutions for illegal clipping of deer antlers since it was made illegal in 1980.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter regulations affecting the slaughter of farm-raised deer.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council earlier this year submitted to the agriculture Ministers a report on the welfare of farmed deer, covering the welfare aspects of their farming, transport and slaughter. Comments have been sought from all interested parties, and we shall respond with our proposals once full consideration has been given to the results of that consultation.

Youth Custody

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many detention centre places have been converted to youth custody places since the coming into force of the relevant parts of the Criminal Justice Act 1982.

Mr. Mellor: Two hundred and eighty-eight.

Convicted Prisoners (Open University Courses)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he used in deciding to make available funds in support of prisoners taking Open University courses, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Education makes an important contribution to the regimes of prison department establishments. The education needs of prisoners span the whole range of adult education, from basic remedial to university undergraduate and other forms of higher education. Open University courses form only a small part of the wider programme of education and training but, from the establishment of the university in 1970, have been regarded as the right distance learning method of meeting the educational needs of a minority of longer-term adult prisoners. The cost of Open University courses represents less than one half of one per cent. of the cost of prison education in England and Wales.

Community Radio Franchises

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the new community radio franchises.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I cannot yet add to the reply given to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 25 July at column *670-71*.

Heroin Addiction

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many registered heroin addicts there were in each year since 1960.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the numbers of persons notified to the Home Office as addicted to heroin (alone or in combination with other drugs) is readily available only from 1973 and is published annually in "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs in the United Kingdom" (Home Office Statistical Bulletins 18/84 for 1973, 23/85 for 1974 to 1984) and in the associated supplementary tables.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to introduce measures with respect to future participation in the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have announced their intention to accept, for a further five years, the optional articles of the European Convention on Human Rights which recognise the right of individual petition and the compulsory jurisdiction of the court, when they fall due for renewal in January 1986.

Metropolitan Police (Recruiting)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vacancies there are in the Metropolitan police for police officers and civil staff.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 30 September there were 406 vacancies for police officers in the Metropolitan police, but the commissioner informs us that a recent welcome intake of recruits has reduced this figure to about 300. The civil staff strength was 339 below ceiling.

Immigration

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will grant exemption to the husbands of women settled in the United Kingdom before 1973, equivalent to that given to the wives of men settled in the United Kingdom before 1973.

Mr. Waddington: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Bangladeshi nationals arrived at Heathrow airport in July, August and September, and how these figures compare with the same period in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in view of low staff morale, increasing delays in interview casework and lengthening queues of incoming visitors from abroad, he will increase the resources devoted to the immigration service generally and at Heathrow airport in particular, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1985, c. 208]: We share the right hon. Member's concern at recent, and current, pressures on the immigration control, and on staff, especially at Heathrow terminal 3. We have discussed these with staff and some staff representatives. Additional staff have already been transferred to Heathrow terminal 3 and to the ministerial correspondence unit at Harmondsworth. More will be allocated there from 3 November, and two training courses for new recruits have been arranged to enable more staff to be allocated to operational duty before Christmas. We believe these measures will assist in tackling the problem of delays, and we shall keep the staffing position under close review.

The right hon. Member has written on these and related matters and we shall be replying to that letter in due course.

Crematoria

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria determine whether or not a town may obtain a crematorium.

Mr. Mellor: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Public Order (Safeguards)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of recent disturbances and riots, any additional measures are to be taken by the police in London to safeguard persons and property on 5 November, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Immigration (Members' Representations)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to the answer of 24 October, *Official Report*, columns 412-3 and 419-20, what action he expects an hon. or right hon. Member to take prior to making representations to his Department regarding a person who has been refused entry at a United Kingdom port as a visitor and whose sponsor lives in the constituency of the hon. or right hon. Member concerned, and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to the answer given on 24 October, *Official Report*, columns 412-3 and 419-20, what action he expects an hon. or right hon. Member to take prior to making representations to his Department regarding a person, who has been refused entry at a United Kingdom port as a visitor and whose sponsor's own hon. or right hon. Member has refused to consider taking up such representations, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Prison Discipline

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received the report of the departmental committee on the prison disciplinary system, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The report of the departmental committee is being published today as Cmnd. 9641, volumes I and II. I am very grateful to the chairman, Mr. Peter Prior, and the members of the committee for the far-reaching and imaginative review they have undertaken of the prison disciplinary system. The subject is a difficult one and the report will need to be studied carefully, but I accept its fundamental conclusion that new adjudication arrangements are needed. We hope to bring forward proposals at an early opportunity. The present arrangements will continue in the meantime and I am grateful to boards for the way in which they have been discharging an increasingly complex task.

Metropolitan Police (Cash Limit)

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he proposes to make to the Metropolitan police cash limit for 1985-86.

Mr. Hurd: In order to enable the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to recruit up to agreed manpower levels I intend to increase the cash limit for 1985-86 by £8 million from £763·184 million to £771·184 million. This increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the public expenditure planning total. The cash limit is non-voted but parliamentary approval will be necessary for the associated Supplementary Estimate covering the increase in police grant.

The financial consequences of the recent disorders in Brixton and Tottenham are being urgently assessed so that further adjustments to the cash limit can be made as necessary.

City of Leicester (Police Costs)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Leicestershire as to the additional costs of policing the city of Leicester during the nights of 9 and 10 October and if he will make a statement on the disturbances which took place in Leicester on those dates.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 October 1985]: I understand from the chief constable of Leicestershire that on the evening of 9 October there was a football match between Leicester City and Derby County. At about 7 pm a number of incidents occurred in the city centre involving football supporters. At about 7.30 pm, because of the number of people still in the city centre, the kick-off time was delayed by 5 minutes and the match subsequently started at 7.50 pm. Just before the end of the match a group of about 50 youths congregated in a small recreation ground in Walnut street which is close to the Leicester City ground. On attempting to disperse these youths, police officers came under attack when missiles were thrown at them. The youths were however dispersed into a nearby estate. Similar attacks on police occurred in nearby areas.

Shortly afterwards police received reports of disorders in the new St. Martins shopping precinct, and the London road area, with windows being smashed and property

removed from window displays. Police officers were deployed into the area and came under attack by approximately 50 youths, as a result of which 2 vehicles were overturned and set on fire. A number of petrol bombs were thrown at police in a number of areas of the St. Peters estate. The youths were dispersed through the estate and the situation contained.

As a result of these incidents 35 people were arrested for various public order offences. Three police officers and one civilian received injuries.

Some 200 police officers were deployed during the football match, but because of the subsequent disorders this was increased to about 500, some of whom were deployed from adjoining forces.

On the following day there were further incidents of disorder, though on a smaller scale. At about 9 pm a petrol bomb was thrown at a general store on an estate three miles from the city centre. At 11 pm in the Highfields area about 40 youths began to engage in stone throwing, breaking some windows. Four petrol bombs were thrown and an office building was set on fire and badly damaged. One car was also burnt out. About 200 police officers were deployed and by 1 am the area was quiet. One policeman was slightly injured. Sixteen arrests were made in connection with the disorders on 10 October.

Information about the additional costs of the policing operation is not yet available.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Sign-posting)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that sign-posting to a new motorway is in position when the new road is opened.

Mr. Ridley: We aim to ensure that signing to a new motorway is provided when it is opened. Signing on the local authority routes which may be involved is, however, outside our direct control. When a motorway is opened in sections full signing may need to await completion of the route, but temporary signing is provided where appropriate.

Motorways (Sign Cleaning and Maintenance)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the new guidelines for motorway sign cleaning and maintenance, it has been arranged for this to take place at three-yearly intervals; and what additional provisions have been made for the repair or replacement of damaged signs on the most heavily used motorways.

Mr. Ridley: The code of practice for routine maintenance of motorway and all purpose trunk roads (a copy of which is in the Library) specifies that sign faces shall normally be cleaned at three yearly intervals. But the code recognises that some signs may need to be cleaned more frequently than that and there is scope for local variations. The code also requires that motorways should receive safety inspections at seven-day intervals and that these inspections include checks on the general condition of signs.

Driving Test Centres

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department requires a town to satisfy in order for it to have a driving test centre.

Mrs. Chalker: The aim is to have a national network of test centres located so far as possible to suit the reasonable convenience of candidates. There is no policy of locating centres in particular towns. The siting of a centre must meet land use planning, police and operational requirements. Most important, it should provide test routes which cover as wide a variety of traffic conditions as practicable and a selection of hazards, so as to impose a meaningful test on candidates.

A11 (Suffolk)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has for improving the A11 at Red Lodge in Suffolk;

(2) what estimates he has made of the relative cost of bypassing Red Lodge on the A11 in Suffolk and of dualling the existing road;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost-benefit comparisons he has made of a bypass on the A11 of Red Lodge, Suffolk, along the route he proposed 10 years ago, and of dualling the existing route through Red Lodge, indicating the land to be required for each of these options, the lengths and approximate costs of the roads required to be constructed in each case, the numbers of properties liable to be disturbed in each case, and any other relevant comparisons.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall answer these three questions together. Plans for improving the A11 at Red Lodge are in the trunk road programme for a start of works between April 1987 and March 1989. At the time of public consultation the Department's preferred option was to dual the existing road, but in the light of public comment a bypass is being considered. The estimated costs are £2·3 million for on-line dualling and £3 million for a bypass. I hope to announce our preferred solution early next year and all the relevant supporting information will be made available at that time.

Commissioners of Irish Lights

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the negotiations with the Irish Government on financing the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

Mr. Ridley: Under the Merchant Shipping (Mercantile Marine Fund) Act 1898 the commissioners' expenditure is met from the general lighthouse fund, for which I am responsible. The fund is not Exchequer money: it is derived from light dues paid by ships using ports in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The fund's accounts, which are laid before Parliament, do not identify the costs incurred by the commissioners in the Republic of Ireland, but for the purposes of the agreement, it has been accepted that 70 per cent. of the commissioners' total expenditure is incurred in the Republic. In future an increasing proportion of this expenditure will be met from sources within the Republic. These will consist of light dues collected in the Republic (set at levels determined by the Irish Government) supplemented, when necessary, by a contribution from the Irish Government. The first supplement will be paid by the Irish Government on 1 January 1987, and will be at a level which, when added to the light dues collected in the Republic in 1985-86, will meet 30 per cent. of the commissioners' expenditure incurred in the Republic in that year. In the subsequent

years the percentage will rise to 35 per cent. in 1986-87; 40 per cent. in 1987-88; 45 per cent. in 1988-89 and 50 per cent. thereafter.

In pursuing these negotiations it has been common ground that the commissioners should continue as a body dealing with the island of Ireland. Further discussions will be opened shortly on the need for changes in the Commissioners' constitution and the statutory relationships that Ministers in the two Governments have with the commissioners.

M25 (Widening)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any contingency plans exist for the widening of the M25 in the event that traffic volumes exceed the planned totals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane) on 29 October.

London Regional Transport

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current full establishments of (i) London Regional Transport, (ii) its rail operations and (iii) its bus operations; and what are the comparable figures for staff in post.

Mr. David Mitchell: These matters are the responsibility of London Regional Transport. I suggest that the hon. Member approaches the chairman direct.

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now make a further statement about the response from London Regional Transport to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, published on 1 February 1984, on the arrangements made by the then London Transport Executive for the maintenance of buses and coaches.

Mr. Ridley: London Regional Transport has made good progress in following up the commission's recommendations since I last reported to the House on 25 October 1984, at columns 684-5. It has now prepared a further response, copies of which I am placing in the Library of the House.

The MMC made some important recommendations for the improvement of the cost accounting and management control systems employed by the then London Transport Executive. On 1 April 1985, LRT established a separate subsidiary company, London Buses Ltd., for the provision of bus services. A further subsidiary, LRT Bus Engineering Limited, was also established to provide vehicle maintenance and engineering facilities for London Buses Ltd. The "arms length" relationship made possible by this restructuring will ensure that BEL is fully accountable for the work it carries out for LBL.

Within LBL, bus garages are now established as separate cost centres and are charged for the repair or replacement of each unit and for their use of materials. There is now regular monitoring of performance against budget. Further steps remain to be taken towards the development of a comprehensive cost information system, and I look forward to the implementation of the necessary measures as soon as possible.

Proposals for a revised management structure for garage engineering maintenance have been prepared, but LRT states that their implementation is dependent on the introduction of a negotiating machinery which reflects more closely the revised corporate structure of LRT and the negotiation through this machinery of a new grading and salary structure. The introduction of revised shift patterns was planned to take effect from April 1985; some changes have now been made, but the bulk of the savings envisaged are also said to be dependent on changes in the negotiating machinery. In my previous statement, I said that I expected to see substantial progress by LRT in the modification of the complex industrial relations structure inherited from the former London Transport Executive. Progress in this area has been limited so far, and I remain anxious to see firm evidence of further progress.

Since LRT's initial response to the commission's report, I have had cause for serious concern about the standards of its bus maintenance as shown by the results of my Department's spot inspections. LRT's response contains some encouraging evidence of a significant improvement in recent months and gives details of the steps which are being taken to ensure that this improvement is sustained. This does not, however, mean that the standard of performance being achieved is yet satisfactory, and I expect to see further improvement at an early stage.

At the BEL workshops, improved production control systems are being installed. Job booking is now operative in both Aldenham and Chiswick works, the valuation of work in progress has been introduced, issues and receipts from the works stores are more closely controlled. Cost reduction targets have been set in all areas and the necessary monitoring procedures are being established, together with the new quality control organisation. A proportion of the work required by LBL is being placed with other contractors in order to provide a continuing check on the prices being charged by BEL.

I now expect to see the steps which LRT and its subsidiaries have taken feed through into real savings in the costs, and improvements in the effectiveness of their bus maintenance activities. The initiatives which they have taken in response to the commission's report, and which I welcome, need to be pursued vigorously and I shall take a continuing interest in their progress.

M1 (Repairs)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 July, *Official Report*, columns *197-8*, if he can now give a precise timetable for the repair of the signposts at junction 33 on the northbound carriageway of the M1 and at junction 28 on the southbound carriageway of the M1; and if he will arrange in future for the condition of such signposts to be monitored at more frequent intervals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I expect the advance direction sign at junction 28 to be replaced by 6 November. A number of signs between junctions 32 and 33 will be either repaired or replaced in the next few weeks. The code of practice for the routine maintenance of motorway and all purpose trunk roads (a copy of which is in the Library) requires that motorways should receive safety inspections at seven-day intervals, and that these inspections should include checks on the general condition of signs, including their cleanliness.

Vehicle Safety (Fuel Tanks)

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce stronger standards for the construction or location of fuel tanks on motor vehicles so as to reduce the risk of explosion in accidents.

Mrs. Chalker: We plan to increase our research effort on fire risk in cars and coaches to see what steps should be taken to reduce fires from all causes including rupture of the fuel tank.

Driving Licences

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Transport which foreign driving licences can now be exchanged in Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Holders of current driving licences issued in other parts of the European Community are entitled to exchange them without a driving test on application within one year of becoming resident in the United Kingdom. They may also, if they can provide evidence of substantial recent experience of driving heavy goods or public service vehicles, apply for the appropriate vocational licence within 18 months of becoming resident.

Holders of Portuguese and Spanish licences will be able to exchange on these terms with effect from 1 January, when those countries accede to the Community.

Holders of licences issued in non-EC countries and territories designated under the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Act 1983 may apply on similar terms for British ordinary, but not for vocational, licences. In addition to Spain, which will now come within the Community provisions, those so far designated are:

Australia, Austria, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Republic of Cyprus, Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Kenya, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland and Zimbabwe.

The legislation relating to both EC and third country licence exchanges stipulates that driving tests must be of a standard comparable to the British L-test.

A40 (Improvement)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answers to the hon. Member for Uxbridge on 29 October, he will make a statement on what is the normal equivalent basis of compensation; and if he can yet make any estimate of the sum involved in this case.

Mrs. Chalker: Compensation on the basis of the reasonable cost of equivalent reinstatement, where applicable, is a matter for negotiation between the parties in each individual case: or, in the event of a dispute, for determination by the Lands Tribunal.

No estimate of the likely level of compensation is yet available.

Derailment (Morpeth)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received his Railway Inspecting Officer's report on the derailment that occurred on 24 June 1984 at Morpeth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received this report, which includes a number of recommendations for preventing a recurrence of this type of accident. Copies are available in the Library. A number of the recommendations are for the British Railways Board, and I look forward to receiving its formal reply. Other recommendations are appropriate for Government consideration. These include:—

1. Introducing statutory powers to require staff involved with the safety of others on the Railway to submit to a breath, blood or urine test for alcohol

(a) if there is any doubt about their sobriety when signing on for duty; or

(b) if it is considered that alcohol may have been a contributory factor to an accident.

2. Considering the extension of any new statutory powers to staff with similar responsibilities in other transport industries who are not covered by existing legislation for testing for alcohol levels; and

3. Modernising the language of the relevant sections of the Regulation of the Railaways Act 1842 and the Offences Against the Person Act 1861; making it an offence for any railwayman to be so under the influence of alcohol or drugs that he jeopardises the safety of others; and ensuring that scales of punishment apply automatically to all railways.

The Government will consider these recommendations very carefully in consultation with the industries concerned and will then report their conclusions to the House.

Aviation Fuel (Prices)

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to trends in aviation fuel prices over the last 12-month period to the latest date for which figures are available; and what projections are available to him about trends over the ensuing three-month period.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have been asked to reply.

The average price of aviation turbine fuel fell by 5 per cent between October 1984 and October 1985. Future trends are highly uncertain.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will print a list of accident rates per mile of long distance heavy goods vehicle drivers for the five years prior to 1968 and the most recent five-year period for which figures are available, including the total number of accidents in each case, and showing such information as he has as to what proportion were caused by driver error.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to the reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *327*]: Data are only collectd on road accidents which involve personal injury. Details are not collected on the causes of accidents or the length of journeys. However the following figures are available:

Heavy Goods Vehicles Involved in Accidents and Involvement Rate per 100 million kilometres travelled: 1963 to 1968 and 1980 to 1984: Great Britain

Year	*HGV involved in accidents*	*HGV involvement rate*	*All vehicles involved in accidents*
1963	31,182	203	436,967
1964	31,148	182	472,070
1965	31,626	184	484,592
1966	31,281	183	468,195
1967	30,340	177	441,110
1968	28,800	164	420,686

Year	HGV involved in accidents	HGV involvement rate	All vehicles involved in accidents
1980	15,343	76	420,500
1981	14,554	74	417,723
1982	14,688	76	431,494
1983	13,504	67	409,690
1984	14,197	68	429,520

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now proposes to revoke the Supplementary Benefit Requirement and Resources Regulations 1985 relating to the accommodation of unemployed persons under 26 years of age.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether, after the passing of transitional protection within the new regulations affecting board and lodging, the topping up of board and lodging payments by local authorities in respect of elderly persons in adult fostering placements will still be permitted;

(2) if adult foster care funded by his Deprtment's board and lodging payments will be affected by the proposed new board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Newton: As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has told the House, my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General met the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments yesterday afternoon to discuss the meaning and effect of the draft board and lodging regulations. Further consideration is being given to points which have been raised, and in the circumstances the Government did not feel it right to ask the House to debate the regulations last night.

Population Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 20 English non-metropolitan counties which have shown the greatest percentage of growth in electorate since 1980; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

County (ranked by percentage growth)	Electorate 1980 (Register)	Electorate 1985 (Register)	1980-1985 Growth	
			Increase in electorate	Percentage increase
Buckinghamshire	399,989	445,193	45,204	11·3
Cambridgeshire	419,553	456,013	36,460	8·7
Wiltshire	373,943	404,946	31,003	8·3
Berkshire	490,916	530,136	39,220	8·0
Northamptonshire	381,097	411,316	30,219	7·9
Hampshire	1,065,312	1,145,556	80,244	7·5
Somerset	318,062	341,523	23,461	7·4
Oxfordshire	379,277	407,181	27,904	7·4
Shropshire	271,757	291,680	19,923	7·3
Dorset	462,535	496,051	33,516	7·2
Lincolnshire	402,600	430,072	27,472	6·8
Hereford and Worcester	464,847	496,039	31,192	6·7
Suffolk	429,342	457,809	28,467	6·6
Bedfordshire	354,590	376,763	22,173	6·3
West Sussex	511,123	542,595	31,472	6·2
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	324,317	343,405	19,088	5·9
Norfolk	524,865	554,217	29,352	5·6
Gloucestershire	374,461	394,620	20,159	5·4
Essex	1,096,536	1,155,227	58,691	5·4
Cheshire	685,692	721,409	35,717	5·2

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the numbers of staff employed on supplementary benefit work in his Department's Woolwich office over each of the past five years for which figures are available, together with the number of supplementary benefit cases handled during the same period.

Mr. Major: Returns of local office staff which subdivide those actually working on supplementary benefits from those on contributory benefits work have been kept only since May 1983.

Additionally, records of the work loads in Woolwich office are kept only for four years.

The average number of supplementary benefits claimants in July of each year from 1982 to 1985 and the number of staff allocated to supplementary benefits work in July in each year from 1983 to 1985 are as follows:

Date	Number of claimants	Staff
1 July 1982	15,416	*
1 July 1983	16,212	148
1 July 1984	17,516	154
1 July 1985	18,380	164

* Not known.

Direct comparisons between numbers of staff and claimants can be misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for those offices covering the Workington travel-to-work area, what is the total number of supplementary benefit claimants for the last month for which statistics are available and the figure for the comparable month in 1984;

(2) for those offices covering the Workington travel-to-work area, what is the total number of unemployed people claiming supplementary benefit during the last month for which statistics are available and the figures for the comparable month in 1984;

(3) for those offices covering the Workington travel-to-work area, what is the total number of supplementary benefit appeals registered during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Major: The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from the Workington local office are as follows:

	July 1984	*July 1985*
All claimants	6,594	6,608
Unemployed claimants	2,509	2,538

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Fourteen supplementary benefit appeals were registered at Workington local office during the four weeks up to 24 September 1985.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit as unemployed; and, of these, how many claim benefit in ordinary board and lodging accommodation, broken down in age bands 16 years to 17 years, 18 years to 20 years, 21 years to 25 years and over 26 years, for each year from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Newton: Information about the number of claims is not available. The total number of unemployed people receiving supplementary benefit over the years 1979-1983 was as follows:

	'000s
1979	566
1980	854
1981	1,318
1982	1,722
1983	1,826

Figures for 1984 are not available.

Information requested on the numbers of unemployed boarders broken down by age for these years is not available. The information that is available on the numbers of boarders is given in paragraph 4 of the statement by the Secretary of State on the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985, Cmnd. 9467.

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the percentage of mortgage defaults resulting in persons losing possession of their homes that are cases where the borrower has received supplementary benefit to take account of mortgage interest but not passed this element on to the building society concerned.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information is not available.

Medicines (Labelling)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to amend the terms of service for the pharmaceutical profession to make correct labelling of medicines a requirement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Consideration is being given to an amendment of the pharmacists' terms of service with a view to the inclusion of a correct labelling requirement for dispensed medicines.

Septicaemia

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of cases of death through septicaemia in each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of deaths for which septicaemia was coded as the underlying cause of death are given in the following table. However, septicaemia may also be mentioned on a death certificate as a complication of some other underlying cause; exact statistics of these cases are not available but they may be as many as ten times the numbers for which septicaemia was coded as the underlying cause.

**Deaths from Septicaemia, 1980-84, England and Wales*

Year	*Males*	*Females*	*Persons*
1980	175	184	359
1981	197	219	416
1982	224	248	472
1983	177	224	401
1984	203	267	470

Source: DH2 Mortality statistics, cause 1980-83
End of year computer runs, 1984
* Underlying cause only

Health Authorities (Yorkshire)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the area health authorities under the responsibility of the Yorkshire regional health authority and name the chairmen, the vice-chairmen and the secretaries of each of the authorities and if he will indicate the addresses to which official correspondence should be sent.

Mr. Whitney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not appoint the vice-chairmen of district health authorities. They are elected annually by the members of the authority from within their own number. There is also no statutory post of secretary to a health authority, although most authorities identify a person to act in this capacity. This information is therefore not held centrally but the right hon. Member may wish to obtain it from the relevant district health authority chairman. The other information requested is as follows:

Yorkshire Region

District Health Authority	*Chairman*	*Address of District Health Authority*
Airedale	Mr J S Bell	Airedale General Hospital, Skipton Road, Steeton Keighley, West Yorkshire, BD20 6ID.

District Health Authority	Chairman	Address of District Health Authority
Bradford	Mr J Royston-Moore CBE	Daisy Bank, 109 Duckworth Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD9 6RL.
Calderdale	Mr A Templeton JP	The Royal Halifax Infirmary, Free School Lane, Halifax, HX1 2YP.
Dewsbury	Mr S Lyles CBE	20 Oxford Road, Dewsbury, WF13 4JU.
East Yorkshire	Mr J H Hooper CBE	Westwood Hospital, Beverley, North Humberside, HU17 8BU.
Grimsby	Mr R Blair	Scartho Hall, Scartho Road, Grimsby, DN33 2BA.
Harrogate	The Viscount Roger Clinton Mills	Ebor Rise, Cornwall Road, Harrogate, HG1 2PU.
Huddersfield	Mr P G Wood	St Luke's House, Blackmoorfoot Road, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD4 5RH.
Hull	Dr Nicholas C Varey	Victoria House, Park Street, Hull, HU2 8TD.
Leeds Eastern	Mrs P C Solk JP	St. Mary's House,St Mary's Road, Leeds, LS7 3JX.
Leeds Western	Mr R W Wood CBE	The General Infirmary at Leeds, Great George Street, Leeds, LS1 3EX.
Northallerton	The Very Reverend Benet Ormerod OH	Friarage Hospital, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL6 IJG.
Pontefract	Cllr R Widdowson	Ackton Hospital, Ackton, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF7 6HT.
Scarborough	Mr F W Pierson JP	Scarborough Hospital, Scalby Road, Scarborough, YO12 6QL.
Scunthorpe	Mr J P Mason	Trent House, Hebden Road, Scunthorpe, DN15 8DT.
Wakefield	Sir Jack Smart CBE JP	Wood Street, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 2HN.
York	Mr Kurt Haslinger	Bootham Park Hospital, York, YO3 7BY.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the members of the Yorkshire regional health authority, the dates of their appointments and any qualifications they may hold in relation to the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: Regional health authority members are appointed for their personal qualities and not because of the professional or other qualifications they may hold. The available information is as follows:

Yorkshire regional health authority membership

Member	Date of appointment
Mr. Ian Cordial	1 October 1982
Dr. George Crouch	1 October 1984
Mrs. Irene Endean	1 October 1984
Councillor John Greetham	1 October 1982
Mr. Brian Hayward JP	1 October 1984
Mrs. Yvonne Jackson	1 October 1983
Mr. Stephen Kaye	1 October 1984
Councillor William Kilgallon	1 October 1984
Mr. Maurice Kirk JP	1 October 1984
Baroness Masham of Ilton	1 October 1984
Mr. Arnold Moore	1 October 1984
Councillor Eric Pickles	1 October 1982
Dr. Julian Roberts	1 October 1982
Mr. Dipankar Sen	1 October 1983
Mr. James Walsh	1 October 1982
Councillor James West	1 October 1984

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the members of the Wakefield area health authority, the dates of their appointments and any qualifications they may hold in relation to the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: We do not hold this information centrally. The responsibility for appointing members of Wakefield health authority lies with Yorkshire regional health authority and the appropriate local authorities. The right hon. Member may therefore wish to obtain the information from Mr. Bryan Askew, the chairman of the regional health authority.

Medical Practitioners

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of National Health Service medical practitioners who failed to achieve the prescribed standard of proficiency within the meaning of the various Medical Acts in force since 1978, and if he will express this as a percentage of those in National Health Service medical practice for each of those years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Medical Act 1983 consolidated legislation providing for General Medical Council control over standards of entry to the medical profession. Proficiency in medical practice can be assessed only in the context of the relevant circumstances, and there is no provision for a uniform formal standard. Statistics are therefore not available.

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations his Department has received concerning the professional conduct of National Health Service medical practitioners in each of the last five years, and what action was taken as a result.

Mr. Hayhoe: Action on the professional conduct of individual doctors is, according to the circumstances, a matter for the General Medical Council, health authorities, or family practitioner committees. No meaningful central record of such representations is available.

Fraud Investigators

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many investigators into social security fraud are employed in *(a)* Greater Manchester, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the West Midlands.

Mr. Major: The number of posts allocated as investigators into social security fraud in the relevant local offices of the Department is as follows:

	Number
(a) Greater Manchester	107
(b) Greater London	223
(c) West Midlands	235

Computerisation

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the progress of his Department's planned computerisation of individual files.

Mr. Major: A substantial proportion of DHSS records are already held centrally on computers, including for example national insurance contribution records, retirement pension records, child benefit records and, on behalf

of the Department of Employment, unemployment benefit records. Progress on our plans to redevelop these computer systems and extend computer support to DHSS local offices was set out earlier this year in Chapter 6 of the second volume of the Green Paper on reform of social security, "Programme for Change" (Cmnd. 9517). My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 11 September the decision to invite ICL to tender for computers to be used on the prototype for the local office project, the largest single project in the computerisation strategy.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many youth training scheme trainees have been recruited by the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected centrally on a regular basis. However, an ad hoc survey carried out in August 1983 indicated that 91 of the 127 health authorities surveyed were involved in schemes or sponsorship. In aggregate, there were 2,057 trainee places either available at that time, or in the later stages of planning.

Drinking Water (Bedfordshire)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any evidence seeking to correlate the incidence of gastric cancer and of methaemoglobinaemia in babies in Bedfordshire with the levels of nitrates and nitrites in drinking water in the county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received no such evidence and am advised that infantile methaemoglobinaemia is a very rare condition in the United Kingdom. My Department is aware of reports of only some 14 cases attributable to nitrate in drinking water in the past 35 years. The last reported and confirmed case was in 1972.

I understand that the epidemiological evidence gives no support to the suggestion that nitrate is a cause of cancer of the stomach, or of any other organ.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will place in the Library a copy of the efficiency study on overpayments of benefits, mentioned in paragraph 6.18 of "Reform of Social Security", volume 2, Cmnd. 9518.

Mr. Newton: The efficiency study was mainly concerned with the organisation of and procedures for dealing with the recovery of overpaid benefits, including overpayments where fraud is involved. It would not be in the public interest to publish the report as a whole, but we will consider whether some parts of it could be made available as the hon. Member asks.

"Community Care"

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will respond to the Second Report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1984-85, "Community Care".

Mr. Whitney: Within the next few weeks.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list all those proposed hospital closures since June 1979 which he has overruled;

(2) if he will list all proposed hospital closures since May 1979, by region, indicating *(a)* whether or not the proposed closure was objected to by the community health council and *(b)* what was the final outcome.

Mr. Hayhoe: For hospitals approved for complete closure between May 1979 and 31 March 1985 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Health on 20 May at columns *317-28*.

Hospitals approved for complete closure between April and 30 June 1985, the latest date for which information is available, are as follows:

Region	*District Health Authority*	*Hospital*
Yorkshire	York	Naburn
North West Thames	South Bedfordshire	Priory
South West Thames	North Bedfordshire	Park
	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	Westmoor House
Wessex	Isle of Wight	Longford

Following are those hospitals for which proposals for complete closure were referred to Secretary of State for approval because they were opposed by community health councils. The table indicates, by year of decision on approval, which proposals were approved or not approved, or on which a decision was pending at 30 June 1985.

Region	*Area/District Health Authority*	*Hospital*	
May to December 1979			
Yorkshire	Humberside	Townend Maternity	A
East Anglian	Norfolk	Bowthorpe	N
1980			
N.W. Thames	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	St. Columbus	A
N.E. Thames	City and East London	London Jewish	A
	Enfield and Haringey	Bearstead Memorial	A
S.W. Thames	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	Henderson	N
1981			
Northern	North Tyneside	Willington Quay	A
Yorkshire	Wakefield	Newton Lodge Annex	A
		Carr Gate	A
		Headlands	A
Trent	Derbyshire	Parwich	A
		Smedley Memorial	A
N.W. Thames	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	Temple Hill House	A
	Bedfordshire	Daneswood Convalescent	A
Wessex	Hampshire	Barton-on-Sea Maternity	N
Mersey	Liverpool	Royal Liverpool Children's, Heswall Branch	N
1982			
Nil			
1983			
East Anglian	Norwich	Home Place Convalescent	A
		Longacre	A
N.W. Thames	Barnet	West Hendon	A
	Brent	Leamington Park	A
N.E. Thames	Haringey	Prince of Wales	A
S.E. Thames	Camberwell	St. Giles	A
S.W. Thames	Wandsworth	South London Hospital for Women	A
South Western	Frenchay	Wendover Maternity	A
Mersey	Wirral	Clatter	A
1984			

Region	Area/District Health Authority	Hospital	
Yorkshire	East Yorkshire	Woodgates Maternity	A
	Bradford	Thornton View	A
		Shipley	N
N.W. Thames	Hounslow and Spelthorne	St. Johns	A
	Paddington and North Kensington	Chepstow Lodge	A
N.E. Thames	Waltham Forest	Hurts	A
	City and Hackney	The Mothers	A
		The German	A
		St. Matthews	A
	Tower Hamlets	Mildmay Mission	A
Oxford	Milton Keynes	Westbury Maternity	A
West Midlands	Worcester and District	St. Wulstans	A
Mersey	Liverpool	Princes Park	A
North Western	Bury	Ainsworth	A
	Wigan	Ashton	A
1985			
Northern	Gateshead	Whickam	A
Yorkshire	Airedale	Wharfedale Childrens	P
	Leeds Eastern	Marguerite Hepton	A
	Leeds Western	Grassington	A
N.W. Thames	North Bedfordshire	Park	A
N.E. Thames	Enfield	Chestnut Cottage	P
	Waltham Forest	Jubilee	P
S.E. Thames	Greenwich	St. Nicholas	P
		Dreadnought Seamans	P
West Midlands	South Warwickshire	Mounor Devis Maternity	A
North Western	Preston	Fullwood Continuation	A
National Heart and Chest Hospitals Special Health Authority		Brompton Hospital,* (at Frimley)	P

A = Approved.
N = Not approved.
P = Decision pending at 30 June.
* Community Health Council Opposition not applicable.

Amalgam Fillings

Mr. Laurie Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will ask the committee on toxicity to make a comparison of allergic reactions from amalgam fillings with established allergies from other substances;

(2) if, pursuant to the answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, columns *131-2*, he will take steps to bring to the attention of patients who received treatment with dental amalgam his statement that there is no convincing evidence of any adverse health effect on the vast majority of such patients;

(3) if, in the light of the representations made to him expressing anxiety about the possible health hazard arising from amalgam teeth fillings, he will take steps to expedite the consideration of evidence on this matter by the committees on toxicity and on dental and surgical materials.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Committees on Toxicity and on Dental and Surgical Materials will be considering the risks and benefits of dental amalgam, including the evidence relating to allergic reactions, as soon as possible bearing in mind the considerable amount of data to be reviewed. I do not consider any really useful purpose would be served by drawing to the attention of patients at some considerable cost my recent statement about the safety of dental amalgam.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance to all general dental practitioners that amalgam fillings be substituted only when a patient presents evidence of the necessity through the written advice of a consultant neurologist.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will write to the hon. Member.

Contraceptives (Form of Notification)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for the introduction of a form of notification to be completed by all medical practitioners upon the prescription of contraceptive drugs and devices indicating the age, marital status and geographic location of the patient and requiring the signature of the patient, or their parent or legal guardian if they are under the age of 16 years, to authorise the prescription of such drugs or devices; and if he will arrange that in the case of minors where parental consent is not obtained the practitioner is obliged to give the reasons for the failure to obtain such permission.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The effect of the decision of the House of Lords in the Gillick case is that doctors may lawfully prescribe contraceptives for young people under 16 without parental consent in certain exceptional circumstances. The Department's guidance makes it clear that only in exceptional circumstances should doctors prescribe contraceptives for young people under 16 without parental consent, and as I have stated this guidance is being reviewed.

Disabled People (Open University Courses)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he used in deciding not to make available funds in support of disabled people taking Open University courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I cannot usefully add to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 24 July at c. *598-599*.

Residential Homes

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authorities have appointed registration officers for private residential homes; and what qualifications he specifies for appointment to these posts.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected centrally and qualifications for these staff are not prescribed. However, advice on the knowledge and skills required of registration officers is contained in section 6 of the code of practice for residential care "Home Life" which was drawn up by an independent working party and circulated with the endorsement of my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Social Services and for Wales, to all local authorities. A copy of "Home Life" is in the Library.

Elderly People

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the principal objectives of this Department for the care of elderly people.

Mr. Whitney: The principal objectives of the Department for the care of elderly people are:

to strengthen the primary and community care service together with neighbourhood and voluntary support to enable people to continue to live at home;

to encourage an active approach to treatment and rehabilitation to enable elderly people in hospital to return to the community wherever possible;

to maintain capacity in the general acute sector to deal with the

increasing numbers of elderly people needing acute medical or surgical treatment; and
to maintain an adequate provision for the minority of people requiring long-term care in hospital or residential homes.
The Government's policies are set out in more detail in the White Paper "Growing Older", Cmnd 8173, published in 1981.

West Middlesex Hospital (Hip Replacement Operations)

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current approximate average waiting time for artificial hip operations at the West Middlesex hospital, Isleworth; how this compares with other hospitals in inner and outer London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of Hounslow and Spelthorne health authority for local information and the chairman of north west Thames for information about the position in other districts in the region.

I am aware that in some areas there are unacceptably long waiting times for hip replacement operations. Health authorities have been asked to give priority to developing this service.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what efficiency savings are being made or expected *(a)* by the Hounslow and Spelthorne district health authority and *(b)* by the Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton district health authority for the contracting out of cleaning, catering and laundry services, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: The reports submitted to the Department on the competitive tendering exercises carried out so far show estimated annual savings of £806,000 for Hounslow and Spelthorne health authority and £802,000 for Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton health authority.

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will institute an inquiry into the effect competitive tendering has had on *(a)* wages and conditions of staff *(b)* redundancy and pension conditions of staff, *(c)* the percentage of National Health Service spending on the above services and *(d)* the quality of the services provided;

(2) if he intends to take any steps to increase the speed of competitive tendering in the National Health Service;

(3) if he has any proposals to change the criteria for competitive tendering in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am glad to report that the policy is proving increasingly successful. So far in England tendering exercises have achieved estimated annual savings of over £28 million. These savings can be used to improve the care of patients. I expect health authorities to keep to the approved timetables for their tendering programmes in order to achieve the maximum benefits from this policy. There should be no lowering of the quality of the service provided, so long as departmental advice is followed. I see no need to set up an inquiry.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement concerning the Coopers and Lybrand report on competitive tendering for the catering requirements throughout district health authorities; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 21 October at columns *47—48* and on 29 October.

Smokers (Statistics)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of smokers who have been recorded by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in each single year during the last 20 years; and what these figures represent as a percentage of the total population during the same period.

Mr. Whitney: Questions about smoking have been asked in the General Household Survey in alternate years since 1972. The following table shows the numbers and percentages of persons who were recorded in the surveys as *(a)* smoking at all and *(b)* smoking cigarettes.

(a) Prevalence of smoking: 1972-1984

Persons aged 16 and over — *Great Britain*

	Current smokers*		Base=100 per cent.
	Percentages	Numbers	
1972	51	11,536	22,471
1974	52	10,990	21,281
1976	49	11,368	23,409
1978	46	10,258	22,518
1980	†43	9,655	22,500
1982	†39	7,689	19,730
1984	†37	6,738	18,058

* For 1974 and 1976, figures include occasional cigar smokers, that is, those who smoked less than 1 cigar a month.
† In 1980 to 1984 males were not asked about pipe-smoking, and therefore the figures for all smokers exclude those who smoked only a pipe.

(b) Prevalence of cigarette smoking 1972-1984

Persons aged 16 and over — *Great Britain*

	Current cigarette smokers*		Base=100 per cent.
	Percentages	Numbers	
1972	46	10,495	22,630
1974	45	9,697	21,372
1976	42	9,774	23,482
1978	40	9,116	22,636
1980	39	8,885	22,554
1982	35	7,016	19,840
1984	34	6,206	18,205

* Figures for cigarettes include all smokers of manufactured and hand-rolled cigarettes.

Foetal Material

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether it is the policy of his Department that foetal material may be used by the cosmetics industry;

(2) whether it is the policy of his Department that the recommendations of the Peel committee on the use of foetal material should apply to all licensed private abortion clinics and commercial firms;

(3) whether his Department is aware of any trade in foetal material, within, to or from the United Kingdom;

(4) whether it is proposed to make unlawful the buying and selling of human tissue including foetal material.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's policy is that the use and disposal of foetal material should be governed by the code of practice recommended in the report of the advisory group on the use of foetuses and foetal material for research—the Peel report, 1972. We have no plans for legislation in this area. If the hon. Member has evidence that the Peel code is being breached, I will certainly investigate it. As far as the buying and selling of human tissue other than foetal material is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 16 May by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) at columns 225-6.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the outturn revenue spending of each district health authority from 1981-82 to 1984-85 and the budgeted revenue spending for 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: The table shows the breakdown of revenue expenditure between regions, including sums spent directly by regional health authorities, from 1981-82 to 1984-85, and the initial revenue allocations notified to regional health authorities for 1985-86. For the years 1981-82 to 1983-84, the expenditure of individual regional health authorities and district health authorities — area health authorities for 1981-82 — is recorded in the Department's annual summaries of health authorities' accounts, copies of which are held in the Library. The summary for 1984-85 is now being prepared and will be placed in the Library when it is available. Details of regional health authorities' allocations to district health authorities for 1985-86 are not held centrally.

	Expenditure				*Initial allocation*
	1981-82 £ *million*	*1982-83* £ *million*	*1983-84* £ *million*	*1984-85** £ *million*	*1985-86* £ *million*
Region					
Northern	482·7	520·8	554·0	586·9	617·3
Yorkshire	547·8	583·4	619·6	657·6	691·9
Trent	646·9	697·0	742·4	795·3	844·8
East Anglian	289·2	289·0	312·5	335·3	352·9
North West Thames	650·0	†633·2	665·4	701·2	713·0
North East Thames	700·2	†800·7	841·1	881·3	903·4
South East Thames	662·7	700·4	739·4	772·1	789·6
South West Thames	515·0	530·4	559·1	586·3	602·8
Wessex	389·0	418·4	449·1	482·6	503·9
Oxford	313·1	334·7	352·8	382·0	396·8
South Western	474·3	507·3	540·4	571·0	607·4
West Midlands	751·7	809·7	861·3	919·3	962·0
Mersey	407·4	436·2	456·6	483·3	503·8
North Western	679·8	730·0	769·2	814·5	849·8

*Provisional figures.

†NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982 resulted in significant boundary changes between the North West Thames and North East Thames regions.

Notes:

1. Expenditure figures are derived from the annual accounts submitted by health authorities to the Department. They exclude payments to doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians and others providing services under contracts with family practitioner committees.
2. The expenditure figures include the expenditure of income generated locally by health authorities, and are therefore not fully comparable with the Department's allocations to regions for 1985-86. The amount of such income in 1984-85 is estimated at £79 million.

Health Authorities (Employees)

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the numbers employed by each district health authority from 1981-82 to 1984-85 and expected numbers employed in 1985-86 for each of the following categories: *(a)* medical nursing, *(b)* paramedical and technical, *(c)* administrative and clerical, *(d)* ancillary and *(e)* others.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member with the information requested as soon as possible.

Registered Homes Tribunals (Decisions)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Her Majesty's Government will take steps to seek to ensure that the reports containing the decisions of the registered homes tribunals are placed in the Library except when their release is expressly refused by the tribunals.

Mr. Whitney: Yes.

Private Medical Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department has given concerning the circumstances in which health authorities should regard their private patients' wings as economically unviable; and what controls he has over the speculative refurbishing of such wings.

Mr. Hayhoe: None. These matters are for decision by the individual health authorities concerned.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that family practitioner committees and community health councils will retain a role in relation to detained National Health Service patients contracted out to private institutions.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will write to the hon. Member.

Social Security Reform (Green Paper)

Mr. Ryder asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Social Security Advisory Committee will be publishing its evidence to him on the proposals in the Green Paper on the reform of social security.

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Social Security Advisory Committee to publish its evidence to him on the proposals in the social security Green Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the fourth report of the Social Security Advisory Committee is being published today. The report reproduces the committee's advice to Ministers on the proposals contained in the Green Paper on reform of social security. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of staff employed by local authorities in calculating and administering housing benefit.

Mr. Major: I shall write to my hon. and learned Friend as soon as possible.

High Rent Area Authorisations

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be *(a)* the estimated cost and *(b)* the estimated gains and losses, by income band, of the introduction of a single taper scheme based on net income and with rent tapers of (i) 35p, (ii) 40p, (iii) 45p and (iv) 50p, and rate tapers of half the rent taper.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1985, c. *515*]: The estimated increase in expenditure of the net income housing benefit schemes, based on the assumptions given in the notes below, would be as follows:

	Rent taper	*Rates taper*	*Increase in expenditure*
	Percentage	*Percentage*	*(£ million per annum)*
(i)	35	17·5	340
(ii)	40	20	160
(iii)	45	22·5	10
(iv)	50	25	−100

The estimated gains and losses by income bands in relation to the current needs allowances would be as follows:

Distance from current scheme needs allowance

Great Britain, thousands

Size of weekly gain/loss £	*More than £20·00*	*Below £20·00 to £10·00*	*£10·00 to £0·00*	*£0 to £10·00*	*£10·00 to £20·00*	*Above £20·00 to £30·00*	*£30·00 to £40·00*	*£40·00+*	*Total*
				(i) Rent taper 35 per cent., rates taper 17½ per cent.					
Gainers									
0·01 to 1·00	20	30	240	180	110	40	20	20	670
1·01 to 2·00	10	40	190	130	90	40	30	40	570
2·01 to 3·00	—	20	130	70	70	40	40	20	400
3·01 to 4·00	10	20	70	50	40	20	20	20	240
4·01 to 5·00	—	—	100	40	20	10	20	20	220
5·01+	—	30	120	70	40	50	50	110	470
Total	40	150	850	540	390	200	170	230	2,570
Losers									
0·01 to 1·00	—	30	270	180	160	120	30	30	820
1·01 to 2·00	0	10	120	70	70	70	60	40	440
2·01 to 3·00	0	—	20	40	20	10	—	—	100
3·01 to 4·00	0	0	40	10	10	10	0	0	80
4·01 to 5·00	0	0	20	10	10	—	0	0	40
5·01+	0	—	—	—	0	—	0	0	10
Total	—	40	480	330	270	210	90	70	1,500
				(ii) Rent taper 40 per cent., rates taper 20 per cent.					
Gainers									
0·01 to 1·00	20	40	230	160	100	30	20	10	610
1·01 to 2·00	10	40	180	90	50	20	20	20	430
2·01 to 3·00	—	20	120	70	30	20	10	20	280
3·01 to 4·00	10	20	60	40	10	10	10	10	170
4·01 to 5·00	—	—	80	10	10	10	—	10	140
5·01+	—	30	110	50	20	30	30	60	350
Total	40	140	790	420	230	120	90	140	1,970
Losers									
0·01 to 1·00	—	30	290	200	180	70	40	20	840
1·01 to 2·00	0	10	120	120	160	140	60	40	650
2·01 to 3·00	0	—	20	70	50	40	20	20	220
3·01 to 4·00	0	—	60	20	10	10	—	10	110

Size of weekly gain/loss £	More than £20·00	Below £20·00 to £10·00	£10·00 to £0·00	£0 to £10·00	£10·00 to £20·00	Above £20·00 to £30·00	£30·00 to £40·00	£40·00+	Total
4·01 to 5·00	0	0	30	20	10	—	0	0	60
5·01+	0	—	10	20	20	10	0	—	60
Total	—	50	540	450	420	280	130	80	1,940
(iii) Rent taper 45 per cent., rates taper 22½ per cent.									
Gainers									
0·01 to 1·00	20	50	230	140	50	20	10	10	530
1·01 to 2·00	10	30	150	70	10	10	10	10	310
2·01 to 3·00	—	20	100	40	20	10	—	10	200
3·01 to 4·00	10	20	100	20	10	10	—	10	170
4·01 to 5·00	—	—	40	10	10	10	10	10	80
5·01+	—	30	100	40	10	20	20	40	240
Total	40	140	720	330	110	70	50	80	1,550
Losers									
0·01 to 1·00	—	20	280	180	120	50	40	30	730
1·01 to 2·00	0	10	170	160	230	130	80	40	830
2·01 to 3·00	0	10	30	70	100	100	30	20	360
3·01 to 4·00	0	—	20	50	60	20	—	10	170
4·01 to 5·00	0	—	80	20	10	10	—	—	120
5·01+	0	—	20	30	30	20	0	—	90
Total	—	50	600	520	540	320	160	100	2,300
(iv) Rent taper 50 per cent., rates taper 25 per cent.									
Gainers									
0·01 to 1·00	20	50	200	100	20	10	—	—	410
1·01 to 2·00	10	30	140	60	20	10	—	10	280
2·01 to 3·00	—	20	110	20	10	10	10	10	170
3·01 to 4·00	10	10	70	10	—	10	10	—	120
4·01 to 5·00	—	—	40	10	—	—	—	10	70
5·01+	—	20	90	30	10	10	10	20	200
Total	40	140	660	230	60	40	30	50	1,260
Losers									
0·01 to 1·00	—	10	290	200	80	40	40	30	690
1·01 to 2·00	0	30	170	170	190	120	70	50	800
2·01 to 3·00	0	10	70	90	120	100	30	20	440
3·01 to 4·00	0	—	30	70	100	40	30	10	280
4·01 to 5·00	0	—	30	30	50	25	—	—	130
5·01+	0	—	70	60	40	30	—	10	220
Total	—	50	660	620	580	350	170	110	2,550

Notes:

1. The estimates are derived from the DHSS housing benefits computer simulation model for standard housing benefit with the following adjustments to the standard parameters as at November 1984:

a. *Needs allowances* — set at the appropriate long-term supplementary benefit scale rate plus £2 eg single person £37·70, couple/lone parent £59·10. The pensioner addition is assumed to be nil, but the dependent child addition is unchanged.

b. *100 per cent. starting point*—the starting point for the calculation of benefit, normally 60 per cent. of rent and of rates, is increased to 100 per cent.

c. *Tapers*—those below the needs allowance become nil whilst those above the needs allowance are set at the levels indicated in each table.

d. *Net Income*—the level of gross income taken into account is reduced where appropriate by the assumed amount of income tax and national insurance contributions, the latter at the not contracted out rate, on the basis that income remains constant throughout the tax year. Similarly only the single person's, married man's, wife's earned income, and additional personal tax allowances are assumed to be available.

e. *Earnings disregards*—both earnings disregards are assumed to be £4·35 the level of the current main earner's disregard once the tax and national insurance elements have been removed.

2. The computer simulation model is based on family expenditure survey data updated and adjusted to reflect actual housing benefit caseloads and expenditure. The estimates are therefore subject to statistical and modelling error. In particular figures of 50,000 or less will be subject to very considerable proportionate error, and individual breakdowns should accordingly be treated with caution.

3. Caseload estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000. Figures of less than 5,000 are indicated by an asterisk. Some totals may, therefore not be equal to the sum of their component parts. Expenditure estimates are rounded to the nearest £10 million.

4. Certificated caseload and expenditure remain unchanged.

5. The model does not take account of the effects of the different schemes on housing benefit supplement. The expenditure estimates therefore do not take account of changes in HBS.

Toxocara Canis

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of toxocara canis have been recorded in the last three years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 October 1985, c. *284*]: Figures are not available centrally on the incidence of toxocara canis. The only serious disease which is certainly attributable to this infection is ocular toxocariasis and about 50 such cases are reported each year in England and Wales. There is no epidemiological evidence to suggest that the incidence of ocular toxocariasis is increasing.

Child Care

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with local authorities and voluntary organisations about joint funding for the care of children who have left mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: Local authorities and voluntary bodies, as well as health authorities, are well aware of the importance we attach to appropriate placements and support for mentally handicapped children, and to the scope for both central funding and joint finance. The policy is regularly emphasised, and specific projects are discussed with voluntary bodies. It is for district health authorities, together with local authorities and voluntary bodies, to discuss local projects and joint finance in the light of local priorities. We emphasise close collaboration in regional reviews. All proposals to use joint finance money must be recommended by the relevant joint consultative committee on which the health and local authorities and voluntary organisations are represented.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what percentage of cases children who are released from mental hospitals return to the parental or family home.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: This information is not available centrally. It is impossible to generalise. Children who are released from mental hospitals either return to their parental or family home, or are placed in other domestic settings.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that full and adequate community care is provided for children who are released from mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: We have helped to finance the move to community care by making over £11 million available under our children's initiative to help both health authorities and voluntary organisations fund schemes for moving children out of hospital; by joint finance allocations to health authorities of over £100 million in 1985-86 about a third of which can be expected to be spent on mental handicap services; and by enabling health authorities to transfer funds from their ordinary budgets for as long as necessary to local authorities or voluntary organisations for patients, including children, transferred from long-stay hospitals to be cared for in the community. In addition, the national development team for mentally handicapped people and the Department's own social services inspectorate are available to advise authorities on the provision of services, and the annual ministerial reviews of regional health authorities provide an opportunity for us to look at how effectively health authorities, jointly with local authorities, are planning the shift to community care.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under which health authorities the children who leave mental hospitals are reviewed for their health, social service and educational needs.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: It is for the health authority making the new arrangements, in co-operation with the relevant local authority, to satisfy itself that a child transferred from hospital is moved into an adequate and appropriate form of community care. All authorities are expected to undertake joint, multi-disciplinary assessments of the needs of mentally handicapped children moving into community care, the aim of which should be the formulation of a programme designed to meet the child's specific health, educational, social and other needs.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been admitted to mental hospitals in each of the last five years; and if he will name the hospitals and their locations.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: The available information is given in the two tables. The figures in table 1 include repeated admissions for short-term care or assessment. Both tables include some admissions to small NHS units in the community.

Table 1
Admission of children under 16 years of age to NHS mental handicap hospitals and units in England, 1980-1984

	All admissions	*First admissions*	*Readmissions*
1980	8,197	466	7,731
1981	9,090	523	8,567
1982	10,254	569	9,685
1983	12,080	659	11,421
1984	12,483	574	11,909

Table 2
NHS mental handicap hospitals and units in England which admitted children under 16 years of age during the years 1980-1984

District Health Authority	*Hospital*
Northern Regional Health Authority	
North Tees	North Tees
	Aysgarth
	Fairbrook
West Cumbria	Dovenby Hall
Darlington	Aycliffe
Durham	Earl's House
Northumberland	Northgate
	Prudhoe
South Tyneside	Monkton Hall
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	
Hull	Cherry Burton Hostel
	Tilworth Grange
Scunthorpe	Rawcliffe Hall
York	Claypenny
Harrogate	Whixley
Bradford	Westwood
Airedale	Castleberg
Calderdale	Stansfield View
Huddersfield	Storthes Hall
	The Mansion, Huddersfield
Leeds Eastern	Meanwood Park

District Health Authority	Hospital
Wakefield	Fieldhead
Trent Regional Health Authority	
North Derbyshire	Ridgeway
	Whittington Hall
	Dronfield
	Amberley House
Southern Derbyshire	Bingham House Hostel
	Aston Hall
Leicestershire	The Glenfrith Group
North Lincolnshire	Harmston Hall
	Caistor
South Lincolnshire	Norton Lea
	Fleet
Bassetlaw	Bassetlaw District General
	Central Nottinghamshire
	Nottingham City
	(Sandfield Children's Unit
	Highbury
Doncaster	St. Catherine's, Doncster
Rotherham	Rotherham District General
Sheffield	Greenacres Hostel
	Ryegate Centre
	St. Josephs
	Hilltop Hostel
	Mill Brook Hostel
	Lightwood House
	Arbourthorne Hostel
	Rivermead MH Unit
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	
Cambridge	Ida Darwin
Peterborough	Gloucester Centre
West Suffolk	Risbridge
East Suffolk	St. Clements, Ipswich
	Jane Walker
Norwich	Little Plumstead
Great Yarmouth	Lothingland
West Norfolk & Wisbech	Windsor Unit (West Norfolk and Wisbech)
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	
North Bedfordshire	Bromham
North West Hertfordshire	Cell Barnes
	Harperbury
South West Hertfordshire	Leavesden
Barnet	Winifred House
Brent	Kingsbury
Paddington	MH Unit, 291 Harrow Road
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Basildon & Thurrock	South Ockendon
Mid Essex	Bridge
North East Essex	The Royal Eastern Counties Group
Barking, Havering and Brent wood	High Wood
	Little Warley Lodge
City and Hackney	St. Leonard's (Penrose House)
Tower Hamlets	Mildmay Mission
Enfield	Enfield (Chase Farm)
Waltham Forest	Leytonstone House
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Brighton	Foredown
	Pouchlands
Hastings	Hill House
	Mount Pleasant
South East Kent	Eversley House
Canterbury and Thanet	Lanthorne
	Highland Court
	Eastry
Dartford & Gravesham	Darenth Park
Maidstone	Lenham
Tunbridge Wells	Leybourne Grange
Greenwich	Goldie Leigh
Bromley	Cheyne

District Health Authority	Hospital
Lewisham & North Southwark	Grove Park
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	
North West Surrey	Botleys Park
	Brook House
West Surrey & North East Hants	Northfield
South West Surrey	King George V
	Royal Hostel Elstead
Mid Surrey	The Manor, Epsom
East Surrey	Royal Earlswood
Mid Downs	Forest
	Goddards Green
Worthing	Southlands
Croydon	St. Lawrence's Caterham
Richmond, Twickenahm & Roehampton	Queen Mary's Roehampton
	Normansfield
Wandsworth	Gardiner Hill Unit
Merton and Sutton	Ellen Terry Home
	Osborne house
	Queen Mary's Hospital for Children
	St. Ebba's
	Southside Home
	The Turret
	Daffodil House
Wessex Regional Health Authority	
East Dorset	The Oakes, Bournemouth
	Castle Hill House
West Dorset	Coldharbour
	Henchard House
Portsmouth	Coldeast
Bursledon	Tatchbury Mount
Winchester	Bereweeke House Hostel
	Bishopstoke House
	The Old Rectory
Basingstoke	Darlington House
	Erdersley House
Salisbury	Hillcote Hostel
Swindon	The Lanterns
	Burderop
	Pewsey
Bath	Amberley Unit
	Beaumonds
	Winsley Centre
Isle of Wight	St. Mary's
	Castle View
Oxford Regional Health Authority	
East Berkshire	Church Hill House
	Clarefield Court
West Berkshire	Wayland House
	Borocourt
Aylsbury	Manor House
Kettering	Rushden
Northampton	Princess Marina
Oxfordshire	Bradwell Grove
	Hernes House
	Holyrood House
South Western Regional Health Authority	
Bristol and Weston	Farleigh
	Yatton Hall
Frenchay	Stoke Park
Southmead	Hortham
	Brentry
Cornwall	Budock
	Loreto House
	The Retreat
	St. Blazey for Children
	West Heath House
	Carn Brea House
Exeter	Royal Western Counties, Starcross
	Langdon

District Health Authority	Hospital
North Devon	Kingsley
Plymouth	Tamar House
Torbay	Steepway Hostel
	Rosehill Childrens
Cheltenham	Windrush
Gloucester	Cransmoor
	Selsley Vicarage
	Thirlstaine Court
	West Lodge Drive
	Holly Brooke House
	Standish
	Twyver Unit
Somerset	Sandhill Park
	Norah Fry House
	Selwood House
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	
Hereford	Dean Hill
	1 Ledbury Rd, Hereford
Kidderminster	Lea
	Lea Castle
Salop	Beeches, Telford
Mid-Staffordshire	White Lodge
North Staffordshire	Stallington
North Warwickshire	Chelmsley
	Coleshall Hall
South Warwickshire	Weston
	Abbeyfields
South Birmingham	Monyhull
Coventry	The Birches
Dudley	Ridge Hill
Solihull	Middlefield
Walsall	St. Margaret's, Birmingham
Coventry	M H Service, Princethorpe
Mersey Regional Health Authority	
Crewe	Barony
	Cranage Hall
Halton	Crow Wood
Macclesfield	Mary Dendy
Warrington	Newchurch
Liverpool	Rathbone
	Olive Mount Children's
Southport & Formby	Greaves Hall
Wirral	Ashton House
North Western Regional Health Authority	
Lancaster	Royal Albert
Blackburn, Hyndburn &	Brockhall
Ribble Valley	Eshton Terrace
Burnley Pendle &	Calderstones
Rossendale	
West Lancashire	Ormskirk Children's
Bolton	Childrens MH Unit, Bolton
Rochdale	Scott House
Salford	Swinton
Stockport	Cherry Tree
	Offerton House
Tameside & Glossop	The Willows, Droylesden

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the record for each regional health authority, in each of the past five years, of releasing children from mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney [*Pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: The table shows, for each region, the changes in the number of children resident in mental handicap hospitals and units at 31 December in the years 1980-1984. The figures include children admitted for short-term care or assessment.

Number of children under 16 years of age resident in mental handicap hospitals and units in England at 31 December

Regional health authority	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984 Small NHS units in the community*	Other NHS MH hospitals and units
Northern	180	153	118	90	10	70
Yorkshire	181	150	133	98	5	63
Trent	243	198	162	123	14	86
East Anglian	91	85	68	56	—	32
North-West Thames	137	115	85	61	—	52
North-East Thames	132	114	90	61	12	57
South-East Thames	180	153	125	108	27	88
South-West Thames	228	190	145	80	2	66
Wessex	236	209	190	180	124	29
Oxford	164	122	112	92	7	66
South Western	188	155	132	116	73	33
West Midlands	213	156	139	122	24	59
Mersey	124	104	59	36	—	28
North Western	124	90	71	51	35	12
Total—England	2,421	1,994	1,629	1,274	333	741

* Separate figures for these units were collected for the first time in 1984. Most residents in these units will have been included in the totals in previous years.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of children in each of the last five years who have ceased to be included in statistics as children in mental hospitals because they reached the age of 16 years.

Mr. Whitney [*Pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: This information is not available centrally. Young people aged 16 and over are also being moved out of hospital, either as part of the children's initiative or as part of the wider shift to community care.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the change over the last five years in the number of children under the age of 16 years who are in mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: The available information for England is given in the table. The figures include children in hospital for short-term care or assessment.

Number of children under 16 years of age resident in NHS mental handicap hospitals and units in England at 31 December

	*Small NHS units providing community provision for mentally handicapped**	*Other NHS mental handicap hospitals and units*	*Total*
1980	†	†	2,421
1981	†	†	1,994
1982	†	†	1,629
1983	†	†	1,274
1984‡	333	741	1,074

* Separate figures for these units were collected for the first time in 1984. Most residents in these units will have been included in the totals in previous years.
† Not available.
‡ Provisional figures.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date he estimates that all children will be removed from long-stay mental handicap hospitals.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: It is not at this stage possible to make such an estimate. Health authorities are well aware of the need to keep under review all the remaining long-stay mentally handicapped children in hospital wards and to make plans for their placement in small locally based units run by the health or local authority, or the voluntary sector, or in their own homes with appropriate support. It would not be helpful to set universally applicable dates for the closure of children's wards. It is important to get children out of long-stay hospital placements, but it is more important to ensure that they are going into more appropriate and better provision, and centrally imposed deadlines may well prove more hindrance than help in achieving this.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children under the age of 16 years are in mental hospitals with 25 or more beds; if he will name the hospitals and their locations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 October 1985, c. *381*]: There were 656 children under 16 years of age resident in NHS mental handicap hospitals and hospital units in England with 25 or more available beds at 31 December 1984. The hospitals and hospital units are listed in the table. The figures include children in hospital for short-term care or assessment. It is encouraging to note the success of the Government's children's initiative in reducing the number of mentally handicapped children in hospital and we will continue to do all we can to ensure that progress continues.

Children under 16 years of age resident in mental handicap hospitals and hospital units with 25 or more beds at 31 December 1984

Regional Health Authority	*District Health Authority*	*Hospitals & Hospital units with 25 or more beds*	*Number of resident children under 16 years of age*
Northern	North Tees	Aysgarth inc Fairbrook	11
	West Cumbria	Dovenby Hall	8
	Darlington	Aycliffe	8
	Durham	Earl's House	26
	Northumberland	Prudhoe	13
		Northgate and District	4
Yorkshire	Hull	Brandesburton	10
		Tilworth Grange	6
	Scunthorpe	Rawcliffe Hall	4
	York	Claypenny	11
	Bradford	Westwood	6
	Airedale	Castleberg	1
	Calderdale	Stansfield View	4
	Leeds Eastern	Meanwood Park	9
	Wakefield	Fieldhead	12
Trent	Leicestershire	Glenfrith	14
	Nth Lincolnshire	Harmston Hall	10
		Caistor	4
	Sth Lincolnshire	St Peters	1
		Norton Lea	1
	Central Notts.	Balderton	7
	Nottingham	Nottingham City	13
	Doncaster	St Catherines	2
	Rotherham	Rotherham Dist. General	9
	Sheffield	Rivermead Unit	1
East Anglian	Cambridge	Ida Darwin	11
	Peterborough	Gloucester Centre	3
	East Suffolk	Banbury House	8
	Norwich	Little Plumstead	6
	Gt Yarmouth & Waveney	Lothingland	4
N W Thames	Nth Bedfordshire	Bromham	5
	N W Hertfordshire	Harperbury	5

Regional Health Authority	District Health Authority	Hospitals & Hospital units with 25 or more beds	Number of resident children under 16 years of age
		Cell Barnes	23
	S W Hertfordshire	Leavesden	5
	Barnet	Winifred House	5
N E Thames	Basildon & Thurrock	South Ockendon inc Duvals Hostel	10
	Mid Essex	Bridge	7
	N E Essex	Royal Eastern Counties	17
	Barking, Havering and Brentwood	Highwood	9
	Enfield	Chase Farm	11
	Waltham Forest	Leytonstone House	3
S E Thames	Brighton	Foredown	5
	Hastings	Mount Pleasant	4
	South East Kent	Eversley House	15
	Canterbury & Thanet	Lanthorne	4
		Eastry	1
	Dartford & Gravesham	Darenth Park	16
	Tunbridge Wells	Leybourne Grange	5
	Greenwich	Goldie Leigh	15
	Bromley	Cheyne	23
S W Thames	N W Surrey	Botleys Park	2
	Mid Surrey	The Manor, Epsom	3
	E Surrey	Royal Earlswood and Earlswood Home	10
	Mid Downs	Forest	13
	Croydon	St Lawrences	4
	Richmond	Queen Mary's	18
	Twickenham & Roehampton	Normansfield	1
Wessex	Portsmouth	Cold East	5
		Sandy Point	5
	Southampton & S W Hampshire	Whitehouse	1
Oxford	East Berkshire	Church Hill House	6
		Clarefield Court	5
	West Berkshire	Borocourt	15
		Wayland	2
	Aylesbury	Manor House	7
	Northampton	Princess Marina	24
S Western	Bristol & Weston	Farleigh and Yatton	8
	Frenchay	Stoke Park	15
	South Mead	Hortham	2
W Midlands	Kidderminster & District	Lea Castle	13
		Lea	2
	Nth Staffordshire	Stallington	3
	Nth Warwickshire	Chelmsley	2
	Sth Warwickshire	Weston	9
	Dudley	Ridgehill	8
	Walsall	St Margarets	18
Mersey	Crewe	Crange Hall	6
	Halton	Crow Wood	4
	Warrington	Newchurch	2
	Liverpool Eastern	Olive Mount Children's	14
	Southport & Formby	Greaveshall	2
N Western	Lancaster	Royal Albert	6
	Blackburn, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley	Brochall	1
	Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale	Calderstones	2
	Salford	Swinton	3

Residential Care Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by authority, *(a)* the number of persons over 65 years, *(b)* the number of registered residential care homes in (i) the local authority sector, (ii) the voluntary sector and (iii) the private sector and *(c)* the number of places in each of these categories for each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 October 1985]: Information on the numbers of statutory, voluntary and

private homes for the elderly and disabled and the number of places in such homes, for each of the years 1979 to 1984 was in replies given by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for Health to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 2 March 1984 at columns *386—390* on 11 June 1984 at columns *378—382* and on 26 July 1985 at columns *952-956*, and to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on 15 June 1984, at columns *586—594*. Data for 1985 are not yet available. I shall let the hon. Member have a reply to point *(a)* as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

NHS (Employees)

Mr. Pendry asked the Prime Minister if she will provide figures for each year since 1979 for the numbers of men and women employed in the National Health Service in the United Kingdom in each main occupational group.

The Prime Minister: The following table gives the available figures.

NHS directly employed staff in United Kingdom
Number of men and women by staff groups at 30 September†*

Staff group	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983 provisional*	*1984 provisional*
Medical/Dental						
Men‡	40,600	41,200	41,700	41,800	42,200	41,600
Women‡	13,900	14,400	15,000	15,600	16,100	16,400
Total	56,500	57,700	58,700	59,300	60,300	59,900
Nursing/Midwifery (excluding Agency)						
Men	44,300	45,200	48,800	50,300	50,700	50,700
Women	478,100	498,200	518,900	525,300	525,500	525,200
Total	522,500	543,500	567,600	575,600	576,200	575,900
Professional/Technical (excluding Works)¶						
Men	25,600	25,500	25,400	26,100	26,200	28,700
Women	68,100	69,800	72,200	74,600	75,900	77,700
Total	93,700	95,300	97,600	100,600	102,100	106,300
Works/Maintenance						
Men	32,200	33,100	34,000	34,000	33,600	32,900
Women	200	200	300	300	300	200
Total	32,400	33,400	34,200	34,200	33,900	33,200
Administrative/Clerical (excluding Ambulance Officers)						
Men	25,600	25,600	26,100	25,700	25,500	25,600
Women	122,600	126,700	130,500	131,700	133,500	134,100
Total	148,200	152,300	156,600	157,400	158,900	159,800
Ambulance Staff (including Officers)						
Men	19,000	19,500	20,000	20,100	20,200	19,700
Women	1,700	2,000	2,100	2,200	2,300	2,300
Total	20,800	21,500	22,100	22,300	22,500	22,000
Ancillary and Other‖						
Men	71,100	71,300	72,300	72,000	70,800	64,300
Women	226,900	228,300	230,200	230,600	225,900	210,300
Total	298,000	299,700	302,400	302,500	296,800	274,700
All Groups						
Men‡	258,400	261,600	268,100	269,900	269,200	263,500
Women‡	911,600	939,600	969,100	950,200	979,400	966,300
Total	1,172,000	1,203,300	1,239,200	1,252,000	1,250,600	1,229,800

* Figures individually rounded to nearest 100. Accordingly, the sum of the component figures may not agree with the totals.
† Excludes agency staff, hospital practitioners, part-time medical officers (clinical assistants), general medical practitionrs participating in hospital staff funds, staff of special hospitals and occasional sessional staff in the community health services. Includes locums. Northern Ireland components include personal social services staff which cannot be separately identified.
‡ Excludes locums for England and Scotland where information by sex is not available.
‖ Includes some social service and unclassified staff in Northern Ireland.
¶ Figures for 1984 include operating department assistants who prior to 1 April 1984 were graded as ancillary staff.

Mr. Pendry asked the Prime Minister if she will provide figures for each year since 1979 for the number of people employed by the National Health Service, broken down by full-time and part-time employees in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The following table gives the available information. I regret the figures are not available for Northern Ireland for 1984.

as at 30 September — *NHS directly employed staff*†* — *Numbers*

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*‡1984*
England						
Whole time‖	571,900	584,700	611,000	617,400	617,200	611,000
Part time‖	339,700	352,200	353,000	354,400	352,800	348,200
All staff	913,500	938,800	965,800	973,700	971,900	959,200
Scotland						
Whole time	87,800	89,500	92,600	93,300	93,700	92,700
Part time	49,200	49,700	51,100	52,300	52,300	52,500
All staff	137,000	139,300	143,700	145,600	146,000	145,200
Wales						
Whole time	38,300	39,300	40,600	41,500	41,500	41,400
Part time	22,500	23,300	23,600	24,200	23,900	23,400
All staff	60,700	62,600	64,200	65,700	65,400	64,800
Northern Ireland¶						
Whole time	34,600	35,700	37,000	37,800	38,100	•
Part time	26,200	26,900	28,500	29,200	29,200	•
All staff	60,800	62,600	65,400	67,000	67,300	•

* Excludes agency staff, hospital practitioners, part-time medical officers (clinical assistants), general medical practitioners participating in hospital staff funds, staff of special hospitals and occasional sessional staff in the community health services. Includes locums.
† Figures are independently rounded to nearest 100. Because of rounding the sum of the component figures may not equal the total.
‡ Provisional.
‖ Excludes locums as full-time/part-time split for this group is not available for England.
¶ Includes personal social services staff as these cannot be separately identified.
• 1984 figures not available for Northern Ireland.

Information Technology (Overseas Sales)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government intend to seek powers to permit the sale overseas of information technology obtained under the work of the Alvey programme; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Prime Minister if she intends to invite the House to consider the decision to renew the United Kingdom's acceptance of the right of individual petition under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Prime Minister: There is no time in the present Session for a debate on the right of individual petition under the European Convention on Human Rights, and I can give no undertaking as regards the time available in the coming Session.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Prime Minister whether, during her recent visit to the United States of America, she discussed the Alvey programme with President Reagan or senior United States officials; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Efficiency Scrutinies

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on steps which are taken to ensure the implementation of recommendations made by efficiency scrutinies.

The Prime Minister: A report "Making things happen: the implementation of Government scrutinies" is being published on 31 October. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

The report, produced by members of the Efficiency Unit, looks at the implementation of scrutinies which were conducted in Departments between 1979 and 1984 in association with Sir Derek (now Lord) Rayner and latterly Sir Robin Ibbs. The report finds that scrutinies have already saved £750 million with more to come, but that delays do occur in making decisions on scrutiny recommendations. These delays cost money.

I have accepted the recommendations the report makes for revising the scrutiny process to ensure a swifter timetable for implementation and for placing the responsibility on permanent secretaries to get results. These changes are reflected in new notes for guidance which will be published and distributed with the report.

Offences Against Children (Judicial Inquiry)

Mr. Dickens asked the Prime Minister if she will institute a judicial inquiry into *(a)* the consequences of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the prevention of child abuse and murder of recent court cases involving cruelty towards babies and young children and *(b)* the

implications of those cases for the co-ordination of departmental responsibilities for agencies charged with providing or supporting child welfare services and the efficacy and appropriateness of current Government guidelines issued on this subject; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Golding asked the Paymaster General how many visits to workplaces have been undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectors of factories in north Staffordshire in each year since 1978.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of visits to workplaces by the factory inspectorate in north Staffordshire in each year since 1981 are as follows:

Year	*Visits*
1981	2,090
1982	2,166
1983	1,908
1984	2,126

The figures for 1978 to 1980 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have been taken on under the youth training scheme by his Department and bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible and shall place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what percentage of young people on youth training scheme programmes go on to full-time employment nationally and by region in England.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular postal survey of young people who have left the youth training scheme. Questionnaires are sent to young people some three months after they leave the scheme.

The following results relate to those leaving the youth training scheme between June 1984 and March 1985 based on a 15 per cent. sample of leavers in each month:

Per cent. going into full-time employment (June 1984—March 1985)

	Per cent.
Northern Region	43
North West Region	54
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	52
Midlands Region	56
South West Region	62
South East Region	68
London Region	64
Wales	45
Scotland	50
Total Great Britain	55

From April 1985 the follow-up survey questionnaire has been sent to all those leaving the scheme. The results for April and May 1985 are:

Per cent. going into full-time employment April and May 1985

	Per cent.
Northern Region	44
North West Region	53
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	52
Midlands Region	58
South West Region	65
South East Region	71
London Region	64
Wales	43
Scotland	49
Total Great Britain	60

Ionising Radiations Regulations

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received on the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985; and if he will make a statement on the action he is taking in the light of these representations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Ministers in this Department have received 10 representations concerning the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. The regulations were the subject of long and wide-ranging consultations by the Health and Safety Commission. I do not propose to take any action.

Information Technology (Training and Jobs)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General what plans he currently has for the development of training schemes and job creation measures specifically related to information technology.

Mr. Trippier: The Government intend to continue their programme of pump-priming support for training which aims to meet skill needs of the labour market. Priority is given to new technology skills including information technology and to computer-based learning techniques. These include the open tech programme, priority skills training and local training grants to employers. We are continuing to provide access to information technology training through skillcentre new technology access centres, information technology centres and the access to information technology scheme.

Labour Statistics

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many young persons aged 16 to 18 years were unemployed in the Workington travel-to-work area during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants aged 18 years and under in the Workington travel-to-work area was 547.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what are the unemployment figures for the county of Cumbria, categorised by sex, age and the duration of unemployment, for the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The figures relate to 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available.

Age and duration analysis of the unemployed for statistical date 11 July 1985
Local Authority areas LZA base 84 AD

Region 08 North County: Cumbria

Males

Duration of unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	11	27	23	29	129	54	40	36	21	12	14	9	10	415
Over 1 and up to 2	12	31	19	36	178	70	34	38	29	21	21	20	27	535
Over 2 and up to 4	34	53	50	59	196	78	56	35	34	37	19	23	20	646
Over 4 and up to 6	25	45	30	21	167	66	39	45	33	40	22	25	23	581
Over 6 and up to 8	31	21	32	33	93	56	41	33	28	24	17	28	21	448
Over 8 and up to 13	142	69	68	54	191	135	74	91	56	68	48	61	38	1,025
Over 13 and up to 26	35	90	118	112	338	217	165	144	109	86	111	158	103	1,806
Over 26 and up to 39	10	54	91	78	309	203	148	120	93	83	88	124	70	1,471
Over 39 and up to 52	13	90	95	87	235	190	111	120	94	96	133	160	74	1,518
Over 52 and up to 65	0	22	40	26	183	110	73	54	42	36	46	99	38	769
Over 65 and up to 78	0	4	36	21	100	67	62	50	31	38	39	68	6	520
Over 78 and up to 104	0	6	25	65	155	100	93	70	62	54	87	126	8	851
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	15	71	219	164	124	117	75	93	97	165	6	1,138
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	6	157	109	120	126	92	73	96	168	14	966
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	69	78	70	71	46	50	68	81	7	540
Over 260	0	0	0	0	55	101	83	92	97	94	119	187	4	822
Grand Totals Males	313	492	619	698	2,766	1,798	1,361	1,231	932	875	1,043	1,504	471	14,101

Females

Duration of unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	12	27	23	19	122	34	27	23	13	11	5	5	0	319
Over 1 and up to 2	11	28	28	30	144	50	26	22	18	10	7	7	0	381
Over 2 and up to 4	18	56	58	35	146	67	32	17	18	22	11	6	0	466
Over 4 and up to 6	10	26	27	21	97	74	26	32	13	16	14	12	0	384
Over 6 and up to 8	11	20	10	23	78	47	21	18	14	18	10	9	0	279
Over 8 and up to 13	84	35	41	39	106	128	63	35	38	34	27	26	0	736
Over 13 and up to 26	24	59	63	65	307	254	127	87	54	75	84	97	1	1,227
Over 26 and up to 39	9	46	61	64	264	220	106	93	69	39	50	52	1	1,014
Over 39 and up to 52	12	42	104	80	220	172	90	45	42	42	53	75	0	977
Over 52 and up to 65	0	12	30	25	125	95	48	28	19	20	25	27	0	454
Over 65 and up to 78	0	1	21	14	53	56	29	21	20	23	30	27	0	295
Over 78 and up to 104	0	3	32	36	92	73	26	23	26	29	43	43	0	448
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	9	33	116	53	35	28	34	47	67	79	0	501
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	5	88	31	18	9	23	31	36	48	0	292
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	32	15	5	11	9	12	27	53	0	164
Over 260	0	0	0	0	40	32	9	12	5	24	40	57	3	222
Grand Totals Females	191	355	487	509	2,086	1,401	688	484	395	453	502	583	5	8,119

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what proportion of *(a)* unemployed males and *(b)* unemployed females in the Workington travel-to-work area had been out of work for (i) one year, (ii) two years and (iii) three years at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the requested information in respect of unemployed claimants as at 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Duration of unemployment—Workington travel-to-work area

Duration	*Percentage of total unemployed*	
	Male	*Female*
One to two years	14·8	15·8
Two to three years	9·9	9·1
Over three years	21·6	11·9

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many community programme places were being supported in the Workington travel-to-work area and the county of Cumbria during the last month for which statistics are available; and how many of those places were part-time and full-time places, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 30 September 1985, 511 community programme places were being supported in the Workington travel-to-work area, and 1,304 in Cumbria. Of those in Workington 387 were part-time and 124 full-time, and of those in Cumbria 932 and 372 respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many people in the Workington travel-to-work area have been unemployed for *(a)* up to six months, *(b)* six months to 12 months, *(c)* 12 months to 18 months, *(d)* 18 months to two years and *(e)* over two years during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the requested information in respect of unemployed claimants as at 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Duration of unemployment—Workington travel-to-work area

	Numbers
Up to six months	1,762
Six months to 12 months	996
12 months to 18 months	441
18 months to two years	294
Over two years	1,359

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what was the monthly increase and the total number of persons employed by community industry in west Cumbria during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number of people employed by Community Industry Ltd. in west Cumbria on 12 September 1985 was 16 adult staff and 108 young employees. On 8 August 1985 there were 16 adult staff and 100 young employees.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of persons unemployed, the percentage rate for unemployment, and the total number of vacancies for *(a)* the Workington travel-to-work area and *(b)* Cumbria at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the Library. On 12 September 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the Workington travel-to-work area was 4,978, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 19·7 per cent. The number of claimants in Cumbria at the same date was 23,830, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 12·8 per cent. The number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres, which cover areas closely corresponding to the Workington travel-to-work area and to the county of Cumbria on the 6 September 1985 was 128 and 1,325 respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of young people under the age of 18 years registered as claimants at unemployment benefit offices at the latest date for which statistics are available in each travel-to-work area in the county of Cumbria.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The figures relate to 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available.

Unemployed claimants aged under 18 in travel-to-work areas in Cumbria

	Numbers
Barrow in Furness	215
Carlisle	401
Kendal	45
Keswick	14
Penrith	94
Whitehaven	242
Windermere	7
Workington	324

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many persons, both male and female, were placed in employment by the Workington jobcentre in the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Workington jobcentre placed 178 people in employment in the five-week period ending 6 September 1985. It is estimated that about a quarter of all engagements are made through jobcentres.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many jobs in the Workington travel-to-work area were being supported by the temporary short-time working scheme during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 13 February at columns *184-185*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General (1) how many redundancies in *(a)* the textile industry, *(b)* machine tool engineering, *(c)* general engineering, *(d)* service trades and *(e)* steel fabrication work were made in the last last month for which statistics are available in the Workington travel-to-work area;

(2) how many redundancy notifications were given during the last month for which statistics are available in the Workington travel-to-work area.

Mr. Alan Clark: A provisional total if 18 redundancies were confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur in jobcentre areas approximating to the Workington travel-to-work area in August 1985, the latest month for which statistics are available. All the redundancies were in the transport industry (Standard Industrial Classification 1980 classes 71-77). There were no advance notifications in August of redundancies involving 10 or more workers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many additional places were sponsored by Allerdale district council under the youth training scheme and the community programme separately for the last month for which statistics are available; and what is the total number of places now being supported by that authority under each scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Allerdale district council has a community programme agency for 395 places, of which 381 places have been approved. Of these places 353 were filled on 30 September 1985. No youth training scheme places are currently sponsored by the district council.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what is the total of young people who have become unemployed and who have registered at unemployment benefit offices in each travel-to-work area in Cumbria in the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table gives, for the travel-to-work areas requested, the numbers of persons aged under 18 years who became unemployed claimants between the counts of 8 August and 12 September 1985.

	Numbers
Barrow-in-Furness	479
Carlisle	327
Kendal	67
Keswick	12
Penrith	65
Whitehaven	233
Windermere	14
Workington	281

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General how many youth training scheme places were identified and supported in the Workington travel-to-work area and the county of Cumbria during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: At the end of September 1985, there were 1,247 approved places in the Allerdale and Copeland local authority districts, which largely correspond to the Workington travel-to-work area, and 3,300 approved places in the county of Cumbria.

During the month of September, 153 places were approved by the Cumbria area manpower board; 56 of these were for one large mode A scheme in Allerdale local authority district.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what proportion of *(a)* unemployed males and *(b)* unemployed females in the Barrow in Furness, Kendal, Whitehaven, Carlisle, Keswick and Penrith travel-to-work areas had been out of work for (i) one year, (ii) two years and (iii) three years at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the requested information in respect of unemployed claimants as at 11 July 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Duration of unemployment—Travel-to-work areas—11 July 1985
Percentage of total unemployed

	Male			*Female*		
	One to two years	*Two to three years*	*Over three years*	*One to two years*	*Two to three years*	*Over three years*
Barrow-in-Furness	16·1	7·7	13·9	16·1	6·2	8·1
Carlisle	15·6	7·4	17·9	14·5	4·8	7·9
Kendal	15·7	6·3	8·4	9·7	4·8	5·3
Keswick	16·3	4·2	11·6	13·1	4·7	9·3
Penrith	14·0	6·5	12·0	12·3	6·4	5·0
Whitehaven	14·5	8·7	15·9	15·2	5·7	8·0

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the percentage of the work force of each region of England employed in manufacturing industry at the latest date, in 1980 and in 1975.

Mr. Alan Clark: The percentages of employees from each of the English standard regions who are employed in manufacturing industry are shown in the following table:

	June 1985	*June 1980*	*June 1975*
South East	21·2	24·4	26·3
Greater London (included in South East)	16·4	N/A	N/A
East Anglia	25·2	28·5	29·8
South West	23·8	27·0	29·0
West Midlands	36·2	42·3	46·4
East Midlands	34·6	37·9	40·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	29·0	33·7	36·9
North West	28·4	34·8	38·6
North	27·6	31·9	35·5

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Bellingham asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in encouraging local enterprise agencies to promote equity investment in small firms.

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the initiatives taken by some local enterprise agencies to bring together small companies seeking equity finance and potential investors. The business expansion scheme introduced in the 1983 Finance Act makes this form of investment particularly attractive and local enterprise agencies are ideally placed to operate "marriage broking" services which respond to the interest the scheme has generated. My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry, will be issuing guidance notes to local enterprise agencies to explain the legal considerations which might arise under investor protection legislation and to offer advice to those agencies considering activities in this area. There is considerable scope for local enterprise agencies to encourage equity investment at local level to the mutual benefit of both small companies and investors and I hope that the guidance notes will help them to continue and expand their contribution to this important objective.

Food Retailers

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to make arrangements to assist retailers of food and refreshments in seaside towns who have suffered severe losses in consequence of the bad weather.

Mr. Trippier: We have no such plans but through the activities of the English tourist board the Government are encouraging seaside resorts to broaden their tourism base and develop all weather attractions. For commercial interests dependent on tourism this is the best insurance in the longer term against the uncertainties of the British climate.

Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what is the average family income, personal income and wage for each region of England at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The most recent regional information on average household income, the wages and salaries component of that income, and the average numbers of persons per household (from which personal income can be derived) is given in the Department of Employment publication "Family Expenditure Survey 1983", a copy of which is in the library.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many loans given under the small firms loan guarantee scheme have not been used for the original intended purpose.

Mr. Trippier: Where a lender is aware of a change in the purpose of a guaranteed loan this is required to be notified to the Department. Information about the number of cases in which a change has been notified could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 84**

SESSION 1984–85

21st October—30th October 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

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Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES 1984/1985

Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
Cambridge Place
Cambridge CB2 1NR
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1021 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

Date of publication: 1986

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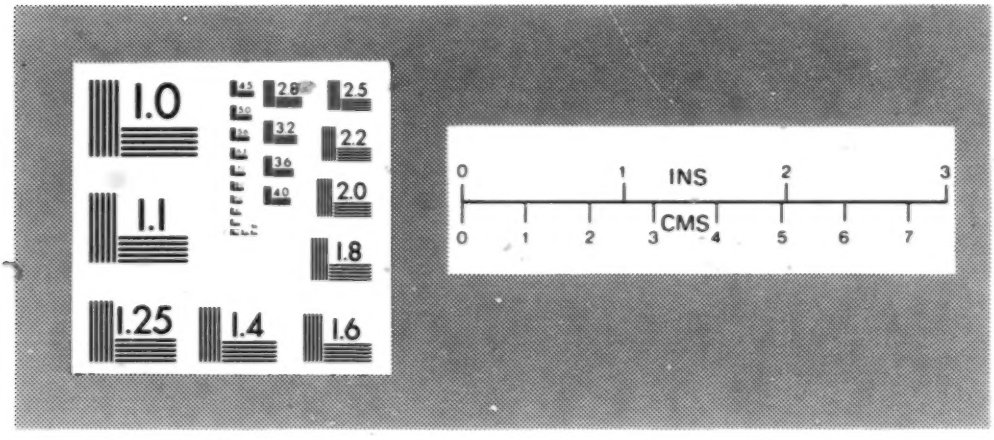
Technical data: Film type: positive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche processed to BSI and NMA standards.
Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Microform Publishing Services



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